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Metal, Fire and Forge: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862

by

Thomas Lawrence Connelly

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Thesis Director's signature:

Frank D. Vanderven

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Preface

There are many people who contributed generously to the completion of this project. My wife, Sally Connelly, edited the work and typed the drafts. Professors Leonard Marsak and George Williams contributed from their wide knowledge of history and writing skill to improve the work. The Rice University History Department, and the Chairman, Professor Katherine Drew, are to be thanked for the generous funds made available for travel and microfilm. Dr. William Masterson, Dean of Humanities, lent much encouragement, as did Professor Andrew Muir, self-professed Sam Houston Unionist.

The staffs of many archives and libraries showed great kindness and gave invaluable assistance. Special thanks are due to the staff of the Confederate Records Division of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Mrs. Harriet Owsley, Manuscripts Librarian, Tennessee State Archives; Mrs. Gertrude Parsley, Reference Librarian, Tennessee State Library; Dr. James Patton, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Faye Locke, Duke University Library; Mrs. Alene Lowe White, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio; Mrs. Dorothy Thomas Cullen, Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Mr. Peter Brannon, Alabama State Archives; and Mr. V. L. Bedsole, Louisiana State University Library.
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A special note of thanks must go to my major professor and dissertation advisor, Dr. Frank Vandiver, who guided the project. Although Dr. Vandiver, when writing on the Civil War, spends his time in the "far country" of the Army of Northern Virginia, it is hoped that some day he
will come to himself and return to "his father's house" in the Army of Tennessee, where resides his ancestor, General John McCown, of Island Number Ten notoriety.
Prologue

I remember the balmy summer nights when my brothers and I slipped onto the old battleground at Shiloh, half afraid of the young park rangers with their new Pershing hats and well-thumbed park guidebooks, and half fearful of the ghosts of the 23,000 casualties whom everyone said roamed the field by night. I remember the many campfires we burned and the phantom Rebels we conjured up while camping and running foxes along the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers, on the ridges overlooking Stone's river, and on Shy's Hill, where the Army of Tennessee was destroyed at Nashville. Shy's Hill was a special haunt for Rebel ghosts before the county pushed through a road there and the local historical society blessed the hill with gaudy aluminum markers. Shy's Hill meant lying on your stomach in a stand of cedars and waiting for the Yankee Twenty-Third Corps to swarm out of the glade below. It meant hunting for fragments of cartridge boxes that might have been some hobo's rusty sardine can—though you never gave that a thought. Most of all, Shy's Hill meant your three great-grandfathers staggering back with Bedford Forrest's cavalry into Alabama for one last campaign.

I could not prove they were with Forrest if I had to do so to get into the Sons of Confederate Veterans. My ancestors left no swords, tintypes, pistols, pension
records—not even a letter. Perhaps they could not even write. But they were with Forrest, because my grandfather said so. Sometimes the entire archives of a soldier's record in the Army of Tennessee consists of a grandfather's tales. I remember how he leaned on the whitewashed fence on his farm along Mingo Branch, in the days before TVA came to Field's Hollow and when Western Electric was still king. He spoke quietly of my three great-grandfathers. All were buck privates in Forrest's cavalry. One was a blacksmith for Forrest, and another deserted. A third had come to America from Cork at the age of fifteen, and had built a mill dam at Green's Mill, which John Bell Hood's army marched across in the Tennessee campaign. He joined the cavalry, but quit to drive steel on the railroad till he literally dropped on the tracks, dead with pneumonia at the age of twenty-four. His wife was only four feet ten inches tall, but managed to lock two of Buell's foragers in the springhouse where they almost died, and also outran a company of Wilson's raiders who wanted the black horse she was riding.

Scores of my own experiences, a handful of tales related by an old man, and a shoe box of bullet fragments—such is one family's heritage in the Army of Tennessee.

Sadly enough, the historiography of the Army of
Tennessee is little more than a composite of such recollections. Except for a few regimental histories and printed reminiscences, and a recent outpour of poorly written battle accounts by hack writers, there has been only one major book on the Army. This book, Stanley Horn's Army of Tennessee, is well written, but suffers from the author's reliance upon memoirs and recollections, and the absence of manuscript sources.

The history of the Army of Tennessee, unlike that of its companion in arms, the Army of Northern Virginia, has been almost completely neglected. A comparison of the amount of writing on both armies bears this out. The most popular anthology of writings on the War is the four volume Battles and Leaders of the Civil War. These volumes contain 186 articles on the Virginia army, and only 98 on the Tennessee army. Another standard work, Civil War and Reconstruction, by David Donald and James Randall, lists in its bibliography over three times as many books on the Virginia army as on the Tennessee force. A random sampling of three volumes of the Southern Historical Society Papers, published intermittently since 1876, shows sixty-three articles on the Virginia army and eight on the Tennessee army.

General American history textbooks reveal the same lack of balance. The bibliography in Henry Commager's
and Samuel E. Morison's *Growth of the American Republic* cites five times as many books on the Virginia army. Morison and Commager spend six pages alone on the battle of Gettysburg, but dismiss the entire campaign from Chickamauga to the fall of Atlanta in three pages. Francis B. Simkins' standard text, *History of the South*, cites twice as many books on the Army of Northern Virginia.

The emphasis is the same in the more popular accounts of the War. Clifford Dowdey's *The Land They Fought For*, a volume in the *Mainstream of America* series, spends 151 pages on the Virginia army and only fifty-six on the Army of Tennessee. Dowdey cites fifty-three books on the Virginia force, and on sixteen on the Tennessee army. There have been thousands of monographs written on Gettysburg, but as yet there is not one good book on the campaigns of Chickamauga, Shiloh, Chattanooga, and especially the Atlanta campaign. This imbalance is shown also in non-scholarly productions, especially literature turned out for the Civil War Centennial. One of the most widely circulated booklets, published by the editors of *Life*, is entitled *Great Battles of the Civil War*. Twenty-eight pages are devoted to the Virginia army, and only eight to the Army of Tennessee.

The Tennessee army does not deserve this neglect. Although it was not as successful as the Virginia army,
it had to face obstacles which Robert E. Lee did not face in Virginia. The Army of Tennessee had to defend a much larger territory, always with fewer men. During the War, it fought over an area of some 225,600 square miles, while the Virginia army only fought over an area of some 22,500 square miles—less than a tenth as large. The Virginia Army never travelled more than sixty miles north of the Virginia border. In contrast, Braxton Bragg's campaign in 1862 alone took the Army of Tennessee 800 miles from Mississippi to the Kentucky-Ohio border, via Alabama and Georgia.

The vast area in which the Army of Tennessee fought was also more difficult to defend than the Virginia country. The Tennessee army's country was penetrated by three rivers, main avenues for a Federal invasion: the Mississippi, Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. The Virginia rivers, most of which rose in the Appalachians, flowed either west to east or east to west. Three good barriers to invasion thus existed in North Virginia: the Potomac, Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers. Also, northern Virginia was a geographical bottleneck, due to the southwest-northeast position of the Appalachian chain. This meant that the entire Confederate line in that section, from the western end of the Shenandoah valley to Chesapeake Bay, would stretch only about 125 miles.
In Tennessee, the situation was reversed. The Army was forced to defend a line that stretched 400 miles from the Mississippi to the Appalachians, with no west-east river in between the Confederate and Federal armies.

To maintain itself in this large area, to concentrate rapidly, to maneuver, the Tennessee army needed mobility. The rail network in the West, however, discouraged concentration. There was no good east-west line. There was a line from Memphis to Nashville via Clarksville, Tennessee, but it was lost in the first year of the War. Even when it was used, a force that needed to go east from Nashville to Knoxville, a distance of 200 miles, must move over a circuitous route of 400 miles via Chattanooga. The second line, the Memphis and Charleston, was about 135 miles to the south, and also fell in the first year of the War. Thence the Army was forced to rely on a third line 180 miles further south, which ran from Atlanta to Vicksburg via Montgomery and Selma. The line was incomplete from Atlanta to Selma, and the trip had to be made by steamboat. This way also was too circuitous. An army in North Mississippi had to travel almost 600 miles to reach East Tennessee, or ten times the distance Lee marched to Gettysburg. In contrast, the Virginia army had three west-east railroads, the
Manassas Gap, Orange and Alexandria, and Southside, that afforded speedy concentration at Richmond, in the Shenandoah valley or on the Washington front.

Lack of manpower proved another disadvantage to the Army of Tennessee. The Army's high command was plagued throughout the War with quarrelsome, ineffectual commanders. These men, usually Jefferson Davis' friends, such as Albert Sidney Johnston, Leonidas Polk, Braxton Bragg and John Bell Hood, frittered away the Army's resources with indecision, dispute and poor leadership. If Davis did not send his friends to command in Tennessee, he sent his enemies, men he was anxious to be rid of in Virginia. These men turned out to be the most capable commanders in the Army of Tennessee's history--P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston. Yet they were constantly at odds with Davis, and their services were hampered by disputes with Richmond.

The Army itself was undermanned and never had the striking power to sustain a good defensive, much less an offensive. On the average, the Army of Tennessee had from 20,000 to 25,000 fewer troops during the War than the Army of Northern Virginia and had to defend a much larger area. Not only was the Tennessee line much wider, but the depth of the western area, from Kentucky into South Georgia and Alabama, meant there were more calls
for dispersion of troops for local defense than in Virginia. Such calls, for example, weakened Joseph E. Johnston's striking power on the retreat from Dalton to Atlanta. Also, although less in number, the Army of Tennessee suffered casualties sometimes higher in percentage than the Virginia army. At Second Manassas, Lee's army of 49,000 lost 9,000 men, while at Shiloh, Albert Sidney Johnston's army of 39,000 lost about 11,000 men. At Chancellorsville, Lee's force of 60,000 troops lost 12,000 men. Bragg had only 38,000 men at Murfreesboro, but also lost 12,000 troops.

The Army of Tennessee was also hindered by a lack of governmental attention. Richmond developed a peculiar attitude toward this force. Either it ignored the Tennessee army when help was needed, such as in the fall of 1861, or else it intervened and meddled in affairs often without consulting the commander. Neglect was the most common policy. Jefferson Davis' preoccupation with Virginia is often attributed to a lack of strategy on his part. This is untrue, for Davis did have a grand strategy. From Jomini he devised a strategy of departmental command, which was destined to isolate the West. According to Davis, each department was to be self-subsisting and able to repel invasion in its borders. In Virginia, compared with Tennessee, this was less
difficult, for Lee had more men and less area to defend. In Tennessee, reinforcements were desperately needed throughout the War to man the extensive lines. There was a time in 1862, when T.H. Holmes, commanding in the Trans-Mississippi area, could have reinforced Braxton Bragg so that Bragg might have had the decisive margin over William S. Rosecrans’ Federal army. Secretary of War George Randolph saw this, and lost his job trying to put the plan into action. Davis was backed in his policy by his military advisor, Robert E. Lee. Lee was an excellent tactician, but a poor overall strategist. He was never able to look beyond the Virginia borders and grasp the total needs of the War. He opposed sending reinforcements West two crucial times: when Bragg was about to be confronted by Rosecrans in the autumn of 1862, and when Grant was approaching Vicksburg in the early summer of 1863.

When Richmond did intervene in Western affairs, often without the commander's knowledge, the results were usually disastrous. In 1862 Davis gave the young, ambitious Edmund Kirby-Smith equal command with Bragg on the Kentucky expedition and so made command discord inevitable. At the same time, Davis, without Bragg's knowledge, gave Earl Van Dorn the command over Sterling Price in Mississippi. Bragg had intended for Price to
assume command of Van Dorn's troops and lead a column to assist in the Kentucky invasion. Instead Van Dorn turned to attack Corinth and wrecked the army. In 1862, Davis forced Bragg to reinforce John C. Pemberton at Vicksburg, and Bragg lost the narrow advantage which might have otherwise won the battle at Murfreesboro. In 1864, Davis relieved Joseph E. Johnston of command of the Army when its morale and effectiveness were at the highest level in two years. One of Davis' friends, John Bell Hood, took command, and soon destroyed the Army.

Despite all of these disadvantages, the Army of Tennessee fought well and left an admirable record. True, the Army was beaten two out of every three times it took the field. Yet it was this constant defeat which made it a great army. It required something special, an intangible elan, to come back from the humiliation of Missionary Ridge and fight heroically at Kennesaw Mountain. It required an element of greatness to lose needlessly, to see victories wasted or lost by ineffectual commanders, and still go on. It also required something extra in the Army's mettle to defend for four years the most precious area in the Confederacy—the Heartland of Alabama, Northeast Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee, which boasted the Confederacy's greatest concentration of food, livestock, iron, raw materials and munition production.
The weld which kept the Army together was its unbeatable spirit, a spirit not unlike that which sparked the Union Army of the Potomac in the winter of 1862-1863. The spirit of the Tennessee army was a regimental, brigade and division elan that boosted the Army's morale without the troops having to look to the high command for inspiration. Hence, while the Army of Northern Virginia was an army dependent for its morale upon a few individuals such as R.E. Lee, and Thomas J. Jackson, the Tennessee army was a group of individuals who trusted in themselves.

The history of the Army of Tennessee remains to be written. There are several reasons why it has been ignored. The influence of the "Lee Tradition" in Civil War historiography explains part of the neglect. Lee and his Army have been deified by writers such as Douglas Southall Freeman and Clifford Dowdey, as the epitome of what Southerners like to see in themselves--knightly manners, gentleness, planter society. The Virginia army has long been pictured as Stephen Benet's "Army of Planter's sons." By contrast, the Army of Tennessee has always been associated with the roughness of the Old Southwest, where, as Henry Nash Smith points out in *Virgin Land*, the plantation "myth" did not carry over. For example, in the Virginia army, a man of the coarseness
of a Jubal Early was considered something of an oddity. In the Tennessee army, a tobacco-chewing, cursing, hard-drinking general such as Benjamin F. Cheatham was an accepted fact. The greatest hero of the West to emerge after the War was the semi-literate, rough slave trader, Nathan Bedford Forrest.

A lack of patronage also explains the neglect. The Virginia battlefields are near to the largest concentrated population area in the United States. Visitors to these fields greatly outnumber those who travel to the widely scattered, generally unassuming battlefield sites of the Tennessee army. Also, Southerners like a winner, and the Tennessee army hardly ever won. Moreover, the high command of the Tennessee army leaves much to the imagination. The generals had a certain dullness and lack of color which fails to inspire writers.

Yet the basic cause of the Army's neglect is a lack of good historical writing. The patronage of the Virginia army began immediately after the War and became self-perpetuating. Beginning with John Esten Cooke and also the Southern Historical Society Papers, Civil War scholarship became identified with the Virginia army. This monopoly was furthered by a weakness in available primary source materials on the Tennessee army. There has been no concentrated area in the West, as in Virginia,
where manuscripts were available. With the exception of the University of North Carolina's Southern Historical Collection, source materials on the Tennessee army were scattered widely and usually found in Northern libraries. Many of the States in the old Confederate Second Department, including Tennessee itself, failed to appropriate sufficient funds for the collection of papers. Many papers, especially those of Western generals such as Pat Cleburne and William Hardee, remain undiscovered except for isolated materials. Only with the recent discovery of many of the Army's papers at Battle Abbey in New Orleans, is there anything resembling a central repository of the army's source materials.

This dissertation is intended as an introduction to a protracted study and re-evaluation of the Army, based primarily on manuscript sources. The period covered, April, 1861 to March, 1862, has been one of the most neglected periods in the Army's history. Most writers begin with the arrival of Albert Sidney Johnston to take command in September, 1861. Yet when Johnston arrived, the mettle of the Army had already been molded by the influences of the Heartland and by the events of the summer of 1861. Both the land, and the army built by Isham Harris, Gideon Pillow and Leonidas Polk in the
summer of 1861 foisted a powerful legacy to Johnston.

When he assumed command, Johnston took control of a weak, newly-made army whose mettle badly needed tempering, and during the fall of 1861, Johnston did his best. But when the mettle was tested in the Federal offensive of February, 1862, the weakness of Johnston's influence stood sharply revealed.

This study considers also the influence of the Army on the land. By the end of Johnston's stay in Tennessee, the Heartland had begun to assume many of the characteristics of the army, characteristics which both the land and the Army would bear through the War. The land was to become the "Central Confederacy," which like the Army, suffered from Richmond's inattention, weak commanders and command dispute. This study also attempts to trace the roots of the peculiar esprit of the Army of Tennessee, and finds it in the nucleus of the Army--the State Army of Tennessee organized by Isham Harris.

The Army of Tennessee's history in the first year of the War was the interaction of metal, fire and forge. The Army, newly molded in the summer of 1861, was the metal. The fire was Johnston's influence, which did not give strong temper to the metal in the autumn of 1861. The forge was the Federal offensive of February, 1862,
which tested the Army of Tennessee's strength. Weakened by an absence of strong command by Johnston, the metal broke, and the Army was hurled back from the Kentucky-Tennessee line into Mississippi. There the Army was remolded and was tempered by the influence of P.G.T. Beauregard, an influence already felt in Johnston's time.
PART I

THE LEGACY OF THE HEARTLAND
THE HEARTLAND

The Upper Hill Cherokee claimed the land as theirs, and gave names to it such as Nickajack, Eastanalle, and Ocoee. The less imaginative foe who drove them out of the Heartland called the region the Cumberland Country, Mr. Robertson's settlement, or the Valley. Nineteenth century travelers also called the Heartland by various names, such as the Great Valley, the Tennessee Valley, the Appalachian Valley, the Switzerland of America, the Pittsburgh of the South, and the Gateway to the Deep South. Such was the region of Tennessee, North Georgia, North Alabama, and Northeast Mississippi.

The Heartland was a large, irregularly shaped region some 120,000 square miles in area. The northwest corner of the square was also the northwest corner of General Albert Sidney Johnston's defensive line at Columbus, Kentucky. The northern border of the Heartland extended 400 miles east almost to Bristol, Tennessee. From Bristol, the line extended south to Macon, Georgia, the southeast corner. From Macon, the southern border of the Heartland ran through Selma, Alabama, to the southwest corner at Meridian, Mississippi. This ragged square was not only the geographical heart of the Confederate States of America, but was an irreplaceable manufacturing, logistical, and communications area. When Johnston assumed command of the Confederate Army of Tennessee in
September, 1861, it was his duty to defend this Heartland.

The history of the Army of Tennessee begins with the influence of the Heartland on Johnston and the Army. In the Heartland the Army was organized, drilled, fed, armed, and equipped. Here the newly formed Army of Tennessee was tested in the fires of Mill Springs, Woodsonville, and Donelson. When the Army left the Heartland in March, 1862, later to return, and turned toward the Mississippi Valley, the Army had changed—and the Heartland also had changed. During the fall of 1861, while the region worked its influence on the army, the military operations in the Heartland were making the region into what was to become the "Central Confederacy."

This was no longer just an area which the Army of Tennessee would defend for the next four years. The region had become a way of thinking which also characterized the Army of Tennessee during its entire existence. The Central Confederacy was a land of confused jurisdiction of military command, of poor leadership, and of unimportance to the Confederate Government. The Army of Tennessee would also be hampered by poor leadership, overlapping command jurisdiction, and inattention by the Government. For four years, the Army of Tennessee, saddled with ineffectual commanders, underarmed brigades, and short rations, would have to defend the most prosperous area and geographically
the most vulnerable section of the Confederacy.

When Johnston assumed command of the Army of Tennessee in September, 1861, he found that the Heartland had bequeathed to him three important legacies which were to influence his defense of the Tennessee line in the fall and winter of 1861-1862--these were material, land, and attitude.
1. Material

The Heartland was the largest concentrated area for the production of war materials in the Confederacy. The region was so important that when Johnston retreated from the Heartland in March, 1862, many believed that he should have turned east to Chattanooga to defend the region instead of moving west to Corinth and into the Mississippi Valley. Chief of Ordnance Josiah Gorgas wrote that this loss of Tennessee was "...the great mistake of the war." Johnston's chief engineer, Major Jeremy Gilmer, wrote "I much regret that Genl. Johnston has decided to move westward...," and in another letter, commented that "I fear we will lose Middle and Eastern Tennessee- and most of the country producing a supply of grain and meat." Colonel George Maney wrote a Richmond politician that the possession of Middle and West Tennessee would be "...as positively advantageous to the enemy as its loss would be disadvantageous to us."¹

In September of 1861, Johnston assumed the responsibility for defense of this area the Rebels could not afford to lose. There were several reasons for the logistical importance of the Heartland. First, it was the principal area of munitions production in the Confederacy. In 1861, the task of preparing ordnance
supplies for immediate use by the armies in the field had to be distributed among a number of places throughout the South before the Confederate government could establish permanent arsenals. Machine shops, foundries, and ordnance works quickly sprang up at Memphis, Macon, Georgia, Nashville, Mount Vernon, Alabama, and Montgomery.

In March, 1862, when the Bureau of Artillery and Ordnance was organized, the Montgomery Depot, the Mount Vernon Arsenal, the Baton Rouge Arsenal, the Memphis Depot, and the Nashville Arsenal were declared to be government installations. These initial munitions areas were vital to the young Confederacy. As will be shown, Nashville was vital as a powder and percussion cap manufacturing center. Mount Vernon and Baton Rouge Arsenals manufactured ammunition for small arms. By September, 1861, both arsenals were preparing to manufacture ammunition for field artillery. Foundries at Rome, Georgia, undertook to cast rifled-guns. The arsenal at Augusta, Georgia, was directed to organize for the preparation of ammunition and the making of knapsacks. Accouterments were manufactured in large quantities at Macon, Georgia.

When Tennessee fell and the temporary installations such as those at Nashville and Memphis were abandoned, others were established deeper in the Heartland. Atlanta became a chief production area for caps and friction primers.
When New Orleans fell, Athens, Georgia, inherited the responsibility for manufacturing rifles and carbines of the Enfield model. Muzzle-loading carbines and, later, breech-loading carbines were assembled at Tallassee, Alabama. When New Orleans was lost, the arsenal at Mount Vernon was moved to Selma, Alabama. The War and Navy Departments also operated a foundry and rolling mills at Selma. North of Selma, iron ore deposits of fine quality were accessible on the Selma, Rome, and Dalton Railroad. At Selma, the naval foundry built ironclads for the defense of Mobile. Half of the cannon and two thirds of the fixed ammunition used by the Confederacy in 1864 and 1865 were reportedly made at Selma. The fifty-acre government arsenal which embraced more than 100 buildings, on short notice could turn out a fifteen-inch gun or a mountain howitzer, swords, rifles, muskets, pistols, and caps. Gorgas wrote that "Had the Confederacy survived, Selma bid fair to become the Pittsburgh of the South." At Montgomery, small arms were repaired and leather articles were manufactured. When Nashville fell, its ordnance shops were transferred to Atlanta, Georgia. North of Atlanta, Braxton Bragg, in July, 1862, ordered his ordnance chief to establish at Dalton, Georgia, a depot of ordnance and ordnance stores for the Army of Tennessee.
Not only makeshift installations but also three of the permanent establishments of the Ordnance Bureau were located in the ore-rich area of the Heartland. Colonel G. W. Rains was commissioned by Gorgas to establish the Government Powder Mills at Augusta, Georgia. Work on the mill was begun in 1861, but powder was not produced there until April, 1862. In September, 1862, the Ordnance Bureau decided to erect at Macon, Georgia, a Central Ordnance Laboratory for the production of artillery, small arms ammunition, and other equipment. Although the laboratory did operate during the War, the delay of machinery for the manufacture of percussion caps, friction primers and pressed bullets in arriving from England limited the laboratory's service. The third permanent establishment planned by the Bureau was a large central armory at Macon, Georgia, for the manufacture of small arms. Like the central laboratory, the armory never reached the production capacity hoped for. Machinery temporarily in operation at Richmond, Virginia, and Fayetteville, North Carolina, would have eventually been moved there, but the War ended before this equipment could be transferred. 4

This concentration of munitions plants was located in the Heartland not merely to have them safely behind the
front lines. Raw material for munitions production was concentrated in the Appalachian Mountain country of Southwest Virginia, East Tennessee, Northwest Georgia, and Northeast Alabama. As the war progressed and the blockade tightened, Confederate dependence upon the supply of nitre, lead, sulphur, and copper from this area became more pronounced.

In 1861 the newly opened copper mines of East Tennessee was the South's only supply of copper, which was needed for field artillery and percussion caps. The copper region lay in an elevated mountain basin of some forty square miles in the southeast corner of Tennessee. Here the Ocoee River, rising in North Georgia, plunges through the gorge in the Unaka Mountains to reach the Tennessee Valley. In 1843, while panning a feeder creek, a gold prospector had discovered copper in this area. Cherokee Indians built a wagon road through the Ocoee River gorge so that copper ore could be transported to Ducktown, Tennessee. In 1860, refining works were erected at Ducktown, and a copper rolling mill and wire works were built at Cleveland, Tennessee, on the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. The Confederates relied upon the sheet copper produced at Cleveland until East Tennessee fell. Then the Rebels scoured the mountains of North Carolina for the copper used in whiskey and turpentine stills.
Saltpeter was needed for gunpowder. Three important saltpeter-producing regions lay in the Heartland. These were the cave regions of the Unaka Mountains in East Tennessee, the Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee, and the Sand Mountain area of North Alabama. By August, 1861, caves in East Tennessee were producing saltpeter for the Rebels. The Military and Financial Board of Tennessee sent its State Geologist, Professor J. M. Safford, to the Cumberland Mountain regions to inquire into the practicability of getting saltpeter from the honeycomb of caverns on the Cumberland Plateau. The Confederates had difficulty in procuring nitre from this region, since most of the known caves had been thoroughly ransacked for nitre in the years 1812-1814. The hoppers and troughs used in the 1812 period had been left in the caves that were searched by the Confederates in 1861. The most productive area for nitre was North Alabama. In 1862, the Nitre and Mining Bureau undertook the task of extracting the mineral in the upper Alabama district near Blue Mountain. The earth was dug up and placed in hoppers. Water was poured over the soil to leach out the nitre. Lye was caught, boiled down, and dried in the sun. Several hundred whites and slaves toiled in the Alabama limestone caves. By the autumn of 1864, the region had produced approximately 222,665 pounds
of nitre at a cost of about 238 million dollars. The Confederacy's lead supply was derived from the Blue Ridge and Unaka Mountains, on the northeastern fringe of the Heartland. The Virginia lead mines at Wytheville yielded between 100,000 and 150,000 pounds of lead each month. Ore from lead mines at Jonesboro in East Tennessee and the Silver Hill mines of West North Carolina was smelted at Petersburg, Virginia. The Confederates also mined a considerable amount of lead in the knobs section of the Tennessee Valley, from Strawberry Plains to the Georgia line. Three sites in Bradley and Monroe Counties of southeast Tennessee were mined. The most important of these was the Hambright Mine near Cleveland which was worked until that region was abandoned in 1863.

Johnston found that he must also be responsible for the defense of the chief gunpowder supply area for the Confederacy. The powder center was established at Nashville under the eye of the Military and Financial Board of Tennessee. By June, 1861, mills along the Cumberland were producing the powder that the Rebel Army in Virginia would use at First Manassas. In July, 1861, the energetic Colonel G. W. Rains of the Confederate Ordnance Bureau took charge of the production of gunpowder in Tennessee. More powder was sent to Virginia, and armies
at New Orleans and Mobile, as well as the Army of Tennessee, drew their powder from the Nashville mills. The Tennessee mills were so important to the Virginia army that Isaac Newton Brown wrote Leonidas Polk in July, 1861, from Virginia that "Powder is the great want, and they are actually looking to Tennessee to supply this part of the country." Shortly after Johnston took command, he wrote Samuel Cooper in Richmond that "Nashville is the only source of supply for my department."\(^8\)

Another task which Johnston faced in the Heartland was the responsibility of defending the Tennessee State ordnance munitions, and accouterment manufacturing area. Many of these manufacturing installations were under private contract to the State and some were owned outright by the State. When the Provisional Army was transferred to the Confederacy in the late summer of 1861, some remained under State supervision. Johnston was forced to protect these State factories, for the Army of Tennessee, consisting almost entirely of Tennessee troops, was supplied with Tennessee munitions. Also, despite the accumulation at Nashville of a large storehouse of Confederate supplies, Johnston was unable to use this source to any extent because Richmond intended that the vast stores collected at Nashville be sent to Virginia. On October 11, Secretary of War Judah Benjamin wrote
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Johnston that "It is not possible to supply you any from the commissary stores at Nashville. They are required for the army here." He added that Johnston would "...have to draw your supplies by purchasing from the country around you." Again on October 16, Benjamin wrote Johnston: "Those supplies at Nashville were collected for the army in Virginia...I desire very much that you should refrain from drawing anything from the stores at Nashville."

The State manufacturing installations and those contracted to the State were generally concerned with five functions: the repair of existing arms, the manufacture of small arms, foundries for casting heavy ordnance, cartridge manufacture, and the manufacture of percussion caps and other equipment. The conversion of flintlock muskets and sporting rifles into standardized weapons created a severe problem for Tennessee, since most of the weapons which Johnston's troops carried into action from Mill Springs to Belmont were arms that had been accumulated in the state arsenal since the War of 1812, or were privately owned rifles and muskets donated or sold to the State. The State Armory at Nashville was employed almost exclusively in the repair of small arms. Shops for converting hog rifles into military arms were established at Nashville, Pulaski, Memphis, Murfreesboro,
Knoxville, and Columbia. The importance to Johnston's operations of the repair and standardization of this motley collection of arms has been almost completely overlooked by historians. As will be shown, the repair of hog rifles and Tower of London muskets became a matter of life or death to the lean regiments of Felix Zollicoffer on the field at Mill Springs.  

The Ordnance Department of Tennessee was probably one of the most efficient in the Confederacy. Its foundries for the manufacture of field and siege artillery were established at Nashville and Memphis, and, by November, both foundries were turning out about six field guns each week. The Memphis foundries, under the able direction of Captain William R. Hunt, turned out six-pounders, smooth and rifled guns, twelve-pound howitzers, Dahlgren six-pounders, and unsuccessfully attempted to manufacture Parrott guns. Other foundries for manufacturing field artillery were private installations contracted to the State, and were scattered around the State. Desperately searching for arms, the Military and Financial Board authorized dozens of contracts for every type of war material from howitzers to shotguns.

By the time Johnston took command, the Tennessee State munitions plants were among the most extensive in the Confederacy. Under the patient direction of Captain
Moses Wright of the State Ordnance Department and later of the Confederate Ordnance Bureau, Nashville factories turned out 100,000 percussion caps daily. The army of Beauregard and Joseph Johnston blundered to victory at First Manassas with percussion caps manufactured at these State installations in Nashville. By October 1, 1,300,000 caps were produced weekly in the state. Nashville factories also turned out shot and shell, saddles, harness, and knapsacks. Captain Hunt's fine State Armory at Memphis turned out 60,000 to 70,000 cartridges daily. Plants to manufacture sabers were built in Memphis, and Nashville, and farm implement factories manufactured swords instead of ploughshares. Powder, ammunition, percussion caps, saddles, cannon, blankets—all were manufactured at the vital State works at Memphis and Nashville. It is not surprising that Johnston's adjutant, W. W. Mackall, wrote that these two cities were "...the great sources of supply for this department."  

Johnston's army was also pressed to hold the Heartland's great stores of food. Before the War, the cotton states had imported cereals and beef cattle from the central and northwestern states. When the War began and the South was cut off from this supply, only three wheat-raising districts in the West remained to feed the armies: the upper Kentucky, the lower Kentucky and central Tennessee,
and the eastern Tennessee or upper Tennessee. In 1861 the Rebels held only two of these regions, the lower Kentucky and central Tennessee, and the East Tennessee district. In 1861 these two districts probably produced an average of more than two and a half million bushels of wheat each. This was double the amount needed by Tennessee's population. Moreover, Tennessee in 1861 was the most important corn-raising district in the Confederate States east of the Mississippi River, with the exception of Kentucky. This vital corn district, invaluable to the Confederacy, lay in the Middle Tennessee basin with Nashville as its center. Each of the nine counties in this area had an average production of more than a million bushels of corn in 1860.\textsuperscript{13}

Johnston also found he must defend one of the two major Confederate sources of livestock. Middle Tennessee and the Massanutten district in Virginia were the major centers in the Confederacy for raising horses and mules. Tennessee supplied more mules than any other Confederate state west or east of the Mississippi River, including Missouri and Kentucky. Tennessee produced more horses than any other Confederate state east of the Mississippi except Kentucky. Tennessee also produced more pork than any other state in the Confederacy except Missouri.
Northern Virginia and Tennessee were the most important wool-producing areas east of the Mississippi. This livestock was invaluable to the Confederacy and could not be lost.

After the initial drive to obtain pork from the Midwest before the arteries of that supply were cut off by the War, Richmond fell back upon Tennessee. In January, 1862, L. B. Northrop, Commissary General of Subsistence, reported to Judah Benjamin that "Tennessee then became the main reliance for a supply for the future use of the Army...." Even then, a ravage of hog cholera in 1861 reduced the Tennessee supply and made it even more valuable. 14

Johnston was confronted too, with the task of defending the region of coal smoke, sunrise whistles, open fires and molten iron. With the iron resources of Pennsylvania and Western Virginia lost to the Confederacy, and with Western Kentucky's furnaces in Union hands, the Cumberland River district from below Fort Donelson to Nashville became the largest iron district in the South. Although other States could have exceeded Tennessee in machinery production, they had to secure pig iron from Tennessee. In 1861 Tennessee was the largest producer within the Confederacy of pig iron, iron blooms, and bar, sheet and railroad iron. Before
the War, more than seventy-one furnaces, seventy-five forges and bloomeries, were concentrated in an area of Tennessee that was difficult to defend. This area was the Western Iron Belt, the land between the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. The fifty-mile wide belt embraced thirteen counties, and encompassed 5,400 square miles from near the Kentucky border to Florence, Alabama. This was a land of abundant water supply and power, of rough Highland country dissected by the Cumberland, Duck, Buffalo, and Tennessee Rivers, and dozens of narrow, swift creeks that raced north to the Cumberland where they furnished the power for the slave-manned forges. In 1861, thousands of slaves and whites were employed at these works, especially the Cumberland iron works. Workers in forges wrought pig metal into blooms which were sent to rolling mills. Moulders poured and cast innumerable items needed by the South, including cannon, skillets, ovens, grape, balls.

When the Federals moved into Tennessee in the winter of 1861, a second line of iron works had already been established in the Heartland. This second, more enduring, iron region was located in the hilly region of North Alabama, south of the Tennessee River. By 1862, the Hale and Murdock works in Lamar County and other similar works were contracting with the Government for a variety
of items, ranging from cannon to cooking pots. The Nitre and Mining Bureau had principal charge of production in the region of nine counties which comprised the iron belt. The Government employed several hundred conscripts and several thousand Negroes in the mines and rolling mills of this region. By the winter of 1861-1862, new blast furnaces, rolling mills, foundries, forges, and shops were established even before the loss of the Cumberland district. During the War, the Alabama blast furnaces and rolling mills turned out 30,000 tons of pig and 10,000 tons of bar iron annually.\(^{15}\)

The concentration of water power, raw materials, and labor in the Heartland provided another responsibility for Johnston. He must defend a large number of private manufactures, many of which were of great logistical importance or political influence. Unfortunately, these manufactures were scattered widely over the Heartland. Holly Springs, Mississippi, demanded protection because of the location there of a large private arsenal which produced small arms, as well as vital railroad shops of the Mississippi Central Railroad. The Memphis and Charleston Railroad shops were at Huntsville, Alabama. Other important shops were at Nashville, Montgomery, and Atlanta. Wheels and axles for rolling stock were manufactured at Knoxville. Engines were made at Atlanta,
Memphis, Nashville, and Holly Springs. Claiborne, Alabama, boasted what were probably the most complete and extensive facilities in the Confederacy for manufacturing supply wagons. Factories at Tallassee, Autaugaville, and Prattville, Alabama, ran 23,000 spindles in 1861; these factories manufactured 500 yards of tent cloth each day. Clothing was made at Nashville and Memphis, shoes at Tuscaloosa, and tanneries were operated at Nashville, Tuscaloosa, and other places. Salt was manufactured at the Upper Works near Old St. Stephens, Alabama, the Central Works near Salt Mountain, and the Lower Works near Sunflower Bend on the Tombigbee. Bayonets and gun barrels were made on the Tennessee west of Nashville by the Hillman Brothers' plant. Hundreds of other small and large factories existed under State and Confederate contracts. Lauderdale County, Alabama, alone, contained rolling mills, cotton factories, tanneries, woolen factories, iron mills, and a navy yard. The necessities of supply and the strategy of dispersion were probably the reasons behind the existing system of contracts. However, the dispersal of manufacturing plants and the ensuing cries for protection from every region of the Heartland only complicated Johnston's task of defending the region.

Johnston inherited as well the problem of defending
the great storehouse and arsenal of the Western Department at Nashville. The wisdom of placing such a vast depot and manufacturing center so near the main lines was debatable. However, there was little Johnston could do to alter the situation. When he assumed command in September, 1861, the defense of Nashville was already necessary. Several factors had combined to make Nashville the great Confederate depot in the Heartland. This city was the gunpowder center of the Confederacy, a Confederate depot for small arms, small arms ammunition, and artillery, and the chief Ordnance Laboratory of the Second Department. The city had inherited the building and operations of the State Bureau as well as the services of its indefatigable Moses H. Wright, Ordnance Chief. By September, shoes, hats, uniforms, and leather goods were being manufactured in large quantities at Nashville. Clothing, tents, bacon, flour, gunpowder, percussion caps, and other items were being shipped from the depot at Nashville and from the factories near the city to Virginia, the Gulf, and other regions. Sabers, harness, muskets, pistols, saddles, knapsacks, gray jeans, rifled guns and smoothbores were manufactured in the city by State and Confederate Government factories and by private installations under contract. As will also be discussed later, the "Nashville Myth" concept proclaimed that, although the
city was almost defenseless, it was invincible. Johnston knew, however, that it could fall. In the autumn of 1861, much of his strategy would be concentrated upon keeping his army between the Federals and this depot and factory center of the Heartland.¹⁷

To defend this vast area of factories, mines, and storehouses, Johnston found that he must draw his army from the area itself. Hence the region was vital as a source of manpower. When Leonidas Polk had commanded the Second Department, he was authorized to call out for defense troops from Arkansas and Tennessee. Polk was not allowed to call out troops from any other State in the Western Department without consent from Richmond. When Johnston took command, Tennessee had already assumed more than her share of the Heartland defense burden. In July, Governor Isham Harris had turned over to Jefferson Davis the Provisional Army, consisting of twenty-two infantry regiments and two cavalry regiments. Yet Tennessee offered more. Before the end of 1861, seventy-one infantry regiments and twenty-one cavalry regiments, and a sufficient number of independent companies to constitute eight additional regiments were mustered into State service. By December, fifty of these regiments, excluding those in training camps, were in State and Confederate service. When Johnston assumed command at the end of
September, Tennessee already had thirty-three regiments in Confederate service, and thirty of these were among the defensive lines of Tennessee. At this time, three other states were represented by a total of seven regiments in the Tennessee line.

On September 21, 1861, Johnston again asked Governor Harris for 30,000 volunteers, and on November 19, the General asked for every man in the State who could be armed. In order to hasten this process, Harris called out 30,000 men of the State militia. By December 25, between 15,000 and 17,000 men were either in the lines or in training camps. Despite the fact that Tennessee was almost completely drained of available troops, Johnston was forced to rely on the state as his main source of reinforcement. On November 19, Judah Benjamin rejected Johnston's previous requests for aid from the Governors of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia. He restricted Johnston to calling out only armed men from Mississippi, Kentucky, North Alabama, and Tennessee. For all practical purposes, this restriction meant calling troops from Tennessee alone. Almost all of the Kentucky regiments which did come were organized in Tennessee recruiting camps. The State armies of Alabama and Mississippi were more poorly equipped than the State Army of Tennessee and generally could offer only unarmed
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regiments, which Richmond would not allow Johnston to accept. Most of the Tennessee troops were called from Central and West Tennessee because of the uneasy political situation in East Tennessee. Not only were these two regions of the state probably the most exposed parts of Johnston's line, but they were also divided by the Tennessee River. To abandon either West or Middle Tennessee would have been a severe blow to Johnston's troop gathering efforts. 18

The need to hold Tennessee in order to bolster his army is an example of the total logistical problem which Johnston found in the Heartland. It was not only that Johnston felt the responsibility of protecting the Rebel storehouse of food and munitions that stretched from the Kentucky border deep into Alabama. Holding Tennessee, the northern half of the Heartland, became a matter of survival to the Army of Tennessee. The Army had to obtain most of its subsistence and many of its troops from the northern border of the State, in the very area where Johnston expected a Federal advance. The need to hold the widely scattered sources of food, men, guns, and other supplies in Tennessee forced Johnston into a rigid policy of territorial defense.

For example, Johnston had to disperse his army both to protect and collect foodstuffs in East and Middle
Tennessee. The supplies in the Nashville depot were not for the Army of Tennessee, and Johnston was told he must live off the country. Yet in 1861, the rich Tennessee storehouse was almost bare, for the State was in the midst of a three-year drought. In Middle Tennessee, what grain was raised and what meats were packed were sent to the Virginia lines. The interior of the Heartland provided little assistance. The fertile Tennessee Valley in Alabama was planted in cotton, and the food crops which grew there were hoarded by planters. The Chattanooga area was a region of pocketed mountain coves and subsistence farming. The Cumberland Mountain region was so poor that Union General A. M. McCook, after an extended stay there in 1862, reported that he knew of no place on the mountain range where a single division could live for a week. 19

This combination of responsibility for defending the war materials of the Heartland and necessity for subsisting his army in scattered supply areas in Tennessee forced Johnston to adhere to territorial defense with little possibility of maneuvering for a tactical advantage. If he surrendered territory for such an advantage, what territory could be spared? Abandon the area north from Nashville to the Kentucky border, and one of the South's largest corn-producing areas would be lost. Should the
upper valley of East Tennessee be conceded to the
Federals, one of the major wheat-raising districts in
the South would be lost. If Nashville fell, the
Confederacy's greatest center of gunpowder production
and the Second Department's center of ordnance and supply
production would be gone. A failure to hold the land
between the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers would bring
the destruction of the all-important iron forges and
bloomeries on which Johnston depended for his river guns
and field artillery. Should the country south of
Nashville be given up, the Confederacy would lose this
largest area of mule supply and one of its two largest
areas of horse supply. There seemed to be no area to
yield, and Johnston felt he must hold it all. To the
north lay the Federal Army in Kentucky. To the south lay
the storehouse of the interior of the Heartland. Between
the two was situated Johnston's army in the Tennessee
country--a country which was the Army's life blood.
2. Land

If the material resources of the Heartland produced heavy responsibility, the region's geography beset Johnston with defensive problems. It was not enough that Johnston found only 23,000 troops extended over a 430-mile line to defend the vast Heartland stores. An equally serious problem was that the geography of the region worked against Johnston's attempts at defense. The topographical divisions of the State produced weak spots in the line, and made communication between districts almost impossible. A combination of geography and human error saddled Johnston with the decision either to defend the present exterior line or to effect a major change in the location of his line. The State's waterways hampered its defense, and the people of the land themselves often worked against Johnston's efforts.

When Johnston took command, the Rebel line in Tennessee extended from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. The right flank of the line rested in the Unaka Mountains. "Unaka," a corruption of the Cherokee word for "land of the white mountains," was the name given to the western fork of the Appalachian chain. South of the Roanoke River in Virginia, the Appalachian chain forked. The east fork preserved the
name "Blue Ridge," while the west fork, the Unakas, extended along the Tennessee-North Carolina border from Virginia to Georgia.

In 1861 the Unakas were still a mysterious land of ice caves, bald summits, semi-arctic plants, April snow and pure springs of icy water. These mountains were not just a single chain of high peaks, although the average elevation was 5,000 feet. If this had been true, Johnston's problem with Unionists in East Tennessee would have been less difficult. Instead, the Unakas were a belt of mountains with parallel ridges, interspersed with deep valleys and hidden coves. A series of ranges with a subordinate chain of outlying mountains and ridges were detached from the main axis. This outline was evident in the extreme northeast corner of the State near the point where the all-important East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, on its course up the Great Appalachian Valley, entered Virginia.

This was a prime Tory region of Tennessee, a land of isolated coves, irregular warfare, bridge burnings, and flights across the mountains to join Union forces. Geography created the problem of the land-locked, non-slaveholding, small farmers in the Unakas. Geography also masked their Fifth Column activities. The result was a forced dispersal of Confederate forces to guard
railroad depots, bridges, and supply areas on the railroad link between Tennessee and Virginia. The mountains swallowed up the movements of the Union raiders who repeatedly lashed at the railroad. They would debouch from the coves of Johnson and Carter Counties to strike the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad north of Bristol. Others would come from the gorge of the French Broad River and the coves of Sevier and Green Counties to strike the Holston River bridge at Strawberry Plains. Further north, others would steal from the coves of Roane and Iron Mountains to attack the Watauga River bridge. There was no chance of obtaining a single concentration of troops to fend off the mountain will o'the wisps. Rebel troops badly needed on the Kentucky line must be detached to guard the numerous vulnerable points.\textsuperscript{21}

West of the Unakas lay an extension of the Appalachian Valley, the Great Valley of the Tennessee. The valley, some 220 miles in length, and bounded by the Unaka Mountains and the Cumberland Plateau, extended from Cumberland Gap on the north to Chattanooga on the south. The valley, drained by the Tennessee and its major tributaries such as the Holston, Watauga, and Nolichucky, contained rich soil with two growing seasons each year. This region was the principal food-producing
area of Johnston's force in East Tennessee. It had been so since the eighteenth century, when Overhill Cherokee and Overmountain white vied for the rich grain lands along the river.

The valley, however, produced more problems than wheat for Johnston. The East Tennessee and Virginia, and the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroads, vital for transporting supplies from Virginia to the West, ran the length of the valley from Bristol to Chattanooga. This exposed line was thus quite vulnerable to the Fifth Column activities in the valley. Moreover, the valley was more than just a flat river bottom. Like the Unakas to the east, the valley was a maze of parallel ridges and numerous valleys, such as the Clinch River Valley. Many of the valleys were formed by ridges interlocking with the Unakas chain and extending far out to the river. This furrow of ridges served to mask the activities of Unionists in parts of the valley such as Johnson's Cove. A hotbed of Union sentiment, the cove was almost completely locked in by mountain ranges extending into the valley. 22

The valley presented Johnston with a still more serious problem. Should Federals enter the valley, they could by using the railroad or roads move without difficulty down the valley to seize Chattanooga, the
gateway to the Deep South. Chattanooga, a great rail junction of the Western and Atlantic from Atlanta, the East Tennessee and Georgia from Knoxville, and the Nashville and Chattanooga from Stevenson, guarded the eastern approach to the Heartland. If Union forces took Chattanooga, not only would the main rail artery to Virginia through East Tennessee be severed, but also Atlanta would be open to invasion. If Atlanta fell, both trunk lines connecting Johnston with the armies in Virginia would be severed. Moreover, the munitions area of the Heartland would be open to destruction. It is no wonder that Abraham Lincoln himself was to regard the move on Chattanooga as the most important of the War. On the north and northwest, Chattanooga was protected from invasion via the Cumberland Mountains. On the west, both the gorge of the Tennessee River and the extension of the Appalachian and Cumberland Mountains into Georgia and Alabama protected the city. The only vulnerable flank was on the east--the valley approach to the city. Should the Yankees seize the upper valley, it would be easy to move swiftly and take Chattanooga from the east.

One of Johnston's subordinates grasped the situation. The day before Johnston assumed command on September 15, Felix Zollicoffer, who commanded
the East Tennessee sector of the Army, moved forward to block the Kentucky entrance into the Tennessee Valley at Cumberland Gap. Cumberland Gap had been a strategic point on the route to Kentucky for two centuries. The Gap had been the bottleneck of the old Warrior's Path which stretched from the Cherokee capitol near Chattanooga to Lake Erie. Between the decades of 1770-1780 and 1820-1830, the Cumberland Gap was also the bottleneck on the Wilderness Road, from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia through Cumberland Gap to the Kentucky Bluegrass. Between 1785 and 1794, the area north and south of the mountain pass was a favorite ambush spot for the Cherokee and Chickamauga who sought to hurl the white settlers back into the Shenandoah Valley. Decades later, the Wilderness Road remained the shortest and most direct route from the Bluegrass to the vulnerable Rebel position in East Tennessee.

Zollicoffer had moved into the Gap after receiving news of an expected Union advance on East Tennessee. Once in Kentucky, he acted swiftly to make the Cumberland Gap position impregnable. On the day that Johnston took command, Zollicoffer's troops were already clearing timber from the area at Cumberland Ford, fifteen miles north of the Gap, and were planting batteries at the Gap. Colonel James Rains of the Eleventh Tennessee
regiment commented that the works, when completed, would "...command a mile & a half of the road on the other side & would mow down any column which should attempt to advance through the gap & across the Ford." Rains added that Cumberland Ford "...is the only pass through the mountains & when we can get it fortified it will be impassable by any force the enemy can send against us." The Gap itself was fortified by both artillery emplacements that commanded the road down the sheer north side for five miles, and elaborate breastworks. The Ford and Gap fortresses appeared to be the strongest position on Johnston's line.  

The strength of Cumberland Gap proved to be a myth. There were five places at which a Federal army could cross the mountains between Johnston's Nashville headquarters and Zollicoffer's position at Cumberland Gap. Three of these, Rogers' Gap, Big Creek Gap, and Wheelers' Gap, debouched into the valley southwest of Cumberland Gap within forty miles of the Gap. A Federal army could easily outflank Cumberland Gap by moving on these routes. This was done later in 1862, when Union General George Morgan easily forced Edmund Kirby-Smith out of Cumberland Gap by flanking him at Rogers' Gap and Big Creek Gap. Two months later, Kirby-Smith effected a reversal of this operation on Morgan when he accomplished
exactly the same procedure. West of these three Gaps were two other routes into Tennessee. One route was by way of Albany, Kentucky, to Jamestown, Tennessee, and the other by way of Tompkinsville, Kentucky, to Gainesboro, Tennessee. Both of these routes entered onto the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee. If the Federals moved by these two routes, communications between Johnston at Nashville and Zollicoffer could easily be severed.

In the fall of 1861, these five entrances into Tennessee constituted for Johnston a "twilight area" of command responsibility and defense. Zollicoffer realized the importance of these entrances, and, in that same autumn, conducted a magnificent campaign which successfully blockaded all five entrances as well as Cumberland Gap. However, he received little help from Johnston in this area where the command responsibility between Zollicoffer and Simon B. Buckner would become confused. Although Johnston agreed on September 23 to the necessity of blocking this twilight area, his efforts to help Zollicoffer in the autumn of 1861 would prove ineffectual.

Indeed, communication was the great problem on the line of passes from Tompkinsville to Cumberland Gap. Of the 128-mile line which Zollicoffer guarded, seventy-one
miles of it crossed the entire length of the Cumberland Plateau or Cumberland Mountains. Geography worked against the Rebels on this sector of Johnston's line. The mountain area was a country of thick forests, almost impassable roads, jagged rocks, and hillside farms. One soldier described the area as a "...miserably poor country," and another termed it as "a desert." Not only was the country completely destitute of supplies, but also the mountain's population from Tompkinsville to Cumberland Gap was hostile to the Rebels. Guerrilla bands struck at the Confederate line of communications, and Unionists fed Zollicoffer false information as to the Yankee whereabouts.

Equally important, the advantage of maneuver lay with the invader. The country was so barren that a permanent Confederate force could not be stationed in this sector of the line to repel an invasion. Also, the area's geography was such that a Union force could assemble at Somerset, Kentucky, and march toward either the Albany, Wheelers', or Big Creek routes without the destination's being revealed until the Federals were in Tennessee. During one such threatened invasion, Zollicoffer confessed uncertainty about whether the enemy troops were marching for Jamestown or Cumberland, which were eighty miles apart. Clearly, the Confederates' worst enemy on the
mountain line was the terrain. Only by Zollicoffer's ingenuity was he able to blockade the passes in the fall of 1861. When the autumn freshets of the Cumberland country changed to the icy rivulets of the mountain winter, the disadvantages of terrain would prove too much to overcome, and Zollicoffer would be forced to move his army forward to Fishing Creek.\(^{24}\)

West of Zollicoffer's position, the geography of the Heartland achieved its greatest influence on Johnston. This was the great Cumberland river basin of Kentucky and Tennessee. The Cumberland rose in the headwaters of Poor and Clover Forks in East Kentucky and flowed 700 miles to the Ohio River. The course of the river was crooked, for the Cumberland entered the Ohio only 325 miles west of its headwaters. Through the Cumberland basin, the Confederate line followed the long curve of the river. On the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau, the Rebel line dipped sharply southward for almost 100 miles, and then extended west across the bluegrass of Middle Tennessee to Nashville. From Nashville the line still followed the course of the river as the Cumberland flowed northwest to the uncompleted fort at Dover, Tennessee. Here the Rebel line left the river and extended west to Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. This long curve of the Confederate line in Middle
Tennessee was a source of trouble to Johnston. The center of the line was at Nashville. The northeast salient was high in Kentucky at Mill Springs on the Cumberland, on a line fifty-five miles north of Nashville. The northwest salient was at the uncompleted Fort Donelson on the Cumberland, thirty miles north of Nashville. Thus, the concave Confederate line as Johnston found it in Middle Tennessee rested on an exterior line of communications with both flanks well in advance of the center.

Not only did Johnston find the Confederate line in Middle Tennessee located on the exterior line of communications, but Confederate operations in the area were under the peculiar influence of the Cumberland River basin. This was not just a geographical basin. The Cumberland basin was a way of life centered upon the river and upon the central town in the basin—Nashville. Outlined on a map, the Cumberland River valley resembles a giant shoe, with the long toe lifted in a kicking position. The top of the shoe lay to the northeast in Kentucky, where the Cumberland was fed by the Rockcastle and other crooked streams. The heel was southeast of Nashville in Middle Tennessee, where the river basin was shaped by the Caney Fork and its tributaries. The toe of the boot, on the northwest, touched the mouth of the Cumberland at Smithland, on the Ohio River.
Northeast of Nashville, 358 navigable miles of the Cumberland River basin lay within the Confederate lines. This area stretched from Nashville to the head of low-water steam navigation at Burnside, Kentucky. Northwest of Nashville, only 117 miles of the basin lay within the Confederate lines before the river flowed past Fort Donelson into Kentucky.²⁵

The fact that so much of the Cumberland River basin lay northeast of Nashville exerted a vital influence upon Johnston's line. Not only did most of the population of the river valley live in the eastern sector, but also the eastern sector was navigable for only six months of the year, from December to May, while the western basin to Nashville was navigable for the entire year. Since a much larger area of territory and population existed in the basin east of Nashville than west of the city, the Confederate line in Middle Tennessee was to be colored by the aspirations of the river people to the east.

To these people of the eastern basin, the most important item in their lives was running water. The Cumberland was news brought from Nashville by packet steamer. The Cumberland was sound: the whistle of the light draught steamboats, the constant gush of the Cumberland over Smith Shoals, and the wild roar of the river swollen by the freshets high up in the Cumberlands.
The important fact to these people was that these sounds were one of power and force, always surging far away to the west. These people knew nothing of and cared little for the meandering pace of the Cumberland west of Nashville. In the eastern basin, the torrential river was invincible and represented security to these people. The Cumberland was a highway to Nashville, the metropolis of the basin. From high up in the tributaries, men shipped downstream their tobacco, millions of board feet of cedar and hickory logs, whiskey, and hemp. Nashville was more than their market— it was their symbol of downriver strength. For the people of the upper Cumberland, life was something which transpired between the upper river and Nashville. From this town on the bluffs came their salt, coffee, and sugar staples for the winter, month-old newspapers, and circuit preachers to hold belated funerals or river baptizings.

The result was a peculiar state of mind among these people which was evident when Johnston assumed a command. As a group, the people of the Cumberland basin had no fear of a Federal advance up the weak line of the Cumberland River to Nashville. The eastern people viewed Nashville as impregnable. Moreover, their only concern for the Federals was a fear that the bluecoats might storm through the Cumberland Plateau from the Albany
route or the Tompkinsville road through Red Boiling Springs. If a Federal advance on the Cumberland did come, the largest part of it would come during the rainy months from December to June when the gunboats could pass over scattered obstructions below Nashville. During these months, the river people below Nashville naturally feared invasion the most. Ironically, the people of the eastern basin eagerly awaited these months of the high waters, for this was the only period of the year when the river above Nashville was navigable. If staples and other supplies were to be shipped upriver from Nashville, it had to be during these months. Hence, the people of 358 miles of the Cumberland area above Nashville welcomed the high water, and the people of slightly more than 100 miles of river west of Nashville feared the high water that might bring gunboats.

And not all of the downriver people were concerned with the danger of Federal penetration into this vulnerable center of the Heartland. Even the people along the short stretch of the lower Cumberland which lay in Tennessee were caught up in the myth of the invincibility of Nashville. These people did their business at the town on the bluffs, admired the city, sought its advice, and trusted its judgment. Ultimately, this city's judgment would be poor. Defensive measures against a
Federal invasion upriver would be weak. Much of the blame for the eventual failure to fortify Nashville must go to the absence of a strong pressure bloc within the Cumberland basin for the region's defense.

The influence of the Cumberland basin was also felt at Fort Donelson, 100 miles downriver from Nashville. It would be an easy matter, especially during the rainy season, for a Federal force to move up the Cumberland River and take Nashville. When Johnston assumed command, there was no defensive position on the Cumberland, despite the fact that this avenue of invasion into Tennessee was one of the weakest points in the Confederate line. In April, 1861, Isham Harris had ordered some fortifications to be erected on the Cumberland, and for a brief period during the summer of 1861, a company of soldiers was stationed at Fort Donelson near Dover, Tennessee. But when Johnston arrived in Tennessee, the fort was abandoned, there were no guns mounted, and no fortifications had been constructed. The reason for this inactivity was command confusion which existed on the inland rivers in 1861. This command conflict will be discussed later. The important thing is that this laxness in defense occurred at a vulnerable spot in the Confederate line. Not only was Donelson supposed to protect Nashville, but the fort was also intended to protect the railroad bridge
of the Memphis, Clarksville, and Ohio line which connected Middle and West Tennessee. 26

Even if Johnston had found a strong bastion at Donelson in September, 1861, still the geography of the Heartland would have frustrated the defense of the Cumberland. Daniel Donelson, the officer Harris appointed to lay out a fort on the Cumberland, had chosen the site of Donelson because it was the best of a poor lot of defensive positions on the river. Although it was considered the strongest defensive point between Nashville and the Kentucky line, Donelson had several geographical weaknesses. Fifteen miles to the west, the Tennessee River flowed north into Kentucky. The only force to guard Donelson against a flank move from the Tennessee River was a small garrison at Fort Henry, almost due west of Fort Donelson. North of Fort Donelson, a network of roads led south from Eddyville, Kentucky, and other potential embarkation centers through the region between the Tennessee and the Cumberland. It would be easy for a Federal army to march south between the rivers and to flank the river fort at Donelson without even using the Cumberland River. South of Donelson, a communication line seventy-five miles long connected the fort with Nashville. But the road to Nashville crossed numerous creeks and expanses of river backwater which cut far inland.
In the rainy season, the creeks became swollen and the backwater became a lake. The dirt road to the south would then become impassable. Thus, even if Donelson were fortified, it would remain a weak position.

West of Fort Donelson, Johnston found that the Tennessee River defenses also suffered from geographical disadvantages. The Tennessee River provided an easy avenue for Federal advance, for the river was navigable year around from its mouth at the Ohio to the interior of the Heartland at Florence, Alabama. An advance up the Tennessee would not only divide Confederate forces in West and Middle Tennessee, but would also sever the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, Johnston's railroad link between Chattanooga and Memphis.

The geography of the region not only provided a route of advance, but also helped to create a state of apathy about the defense of the Tennessee River. There was no unified body of opinion among the Tennessee River people which demanded ample Fortifications on the river. The reason for this absence of pressure lay in the nature of the river. The Tennessee was actually not one river, but three. The upper river consisted of 200 miles of water between Knoxville and Chattanooga. Including the navigable tributaries of the Tennessee between the two cities, there were 825 miles of water navigation in
this region. The steamboat traffic in corn, wheat, and cotton was heavy, and Chattanooga became to the people of the Upper Tennessee what Nashville was to the Upper Cumberland populace. The Upper Tennessee population was not concerned with a Federal advance up the Tennessee. For three months of each year, the navigation of the Tennessee was completely closed, and was extremely hazardous during the other nine months. At Chattanooga, the peculiar curve of the Tennessee westward through the gorge of the Cumberland Mountains created a morass of whirlpools, sucks, sandbars, and flint shoals which extended forty miles below the city. Tumbling Shoals, the Suck, and Ross's Towhead were obstructions feared by even the boatmen of shallow draught vessels. It would be impossible to bring a gunboat upriver through the swift waters of the mountain gorges below Chattanooga. The only concern of Upper Tennessee Confederates was Fifth Column activities in the valley, and not the fear of an invasion from below Chattanooga.  

This lack of concern for an upriver invasion also existed in the Central Tennessee River region, between Chattanooga and Florence. The valley here was a planter's country of corn and cotton, which grew abundantly in the deep reddish loam. But the planters did not fear an
invasion from downstream because the Central Valley was almost completely isolated from the Lower Tennessee region. At Big Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee, between Brown's Ferry and Florence, the river fell eighty-five feet within fifteen miles over a series of cascades and flint shoals. Here the Tennessee was navigable downstream only for three weeks during the year, and then only by light draught boats. A person could cross the Tennessee at the shoals without wetting his feet, and even in high water, the lightest flatboat could not ascend the shoals without rollers. Not only had geography created a barrier to the downriver traffic, but the terrain of the Central Valley created another bulwark against concern for activities downriver. On the sandy highlands overlooking the river valley, the small, non-slaveholding Unionist farmers carried on constant guerrilla warfare with the river planters. The counties south of such river towns as Decatur were hotbeds not only of guerrilla activity but also Union recruiting. This range of Unionist counties, which extended across Alabama parallel to the river counties, provided many volunteers for such Unionist raiders as Abel Streight who penetrated the region. This Fifth Column activity was of great concern to the river people, many of whom were afraid to be outspoken in their support of the
Confederacy for fear of reprisals. Landlocked by the shoals and harassed by Tories on their doorstep, the Confederates of the Central Valley had little time to lobby for fortifications on the Tennessee. 29

Yet even the people of the Lower Tennessee Valley below Florence did not clamor for ample fortifications. The character of the river was certainly different, for there were no serious obstructions from Florence to Paducah and this portion was navigable all year. Yet no strong pressure bloc was formed and no attempt was made to provide the Lower Tennessee with strong fortifications. This failure was due to two factors: the inattention of General Leonidas Polk, who was in charge of the river defenses after Johnston took command, and geographical factors. Polk's inattention will be discussed later in connection with his actions as commander of the left wing, and sufficient here to say that his attitude was in part caused by geographical problems. When Polk commanded the Second Department in the summer of 1861, his jurisdiction extended only to the west bank of the Tennessee. Thus, the two central paths into the Heartland, the Cumberland and the Tennessee, had no real commander during the summer of 1861 except state authorities. When Johnston assumed command in September, Polk's jurisdiction was extended to include the rivers.
As events later showed, Polk had little interest in inland river defense.

There was little effort made by the population of the Lower Valley to urge strong Confederate defenses. Except for one ineffectual protest by a citizens' group from Florence and Tuscumbia, Alabama, no pressure was exerted. The reason for this apathy was probably the geography of the Lower Valley. The cotton planters who lived west of the Tennessee River carried on their business at Memphis, and their concern was usually for the safety of that city. The people who lived in the river counties of the Lower Tennessee were not concerned with any Confederate defenses, for this region was Union country. The river was a poor land of thin topsoil, few slaves, and strong Union sentiment. The river counties opposed secession in June, 1861, and responded only feebly to calls for Confederate troops. Throughout the war, sporadic guerrilla activity flickered in the swamp bottoms of the lower valley. Henderson, Hardin, Wayne, and Decatur Counties were hotbeds of Fifth Column activity.

The defense of the Tennessee River was further weakened by the site selected as the defensive point on the river. Johnston inherited the poorly designed works at Fort Henry. In May of 1861, when State authorities were searching for a place to locate a fort on the river,
they passed up a strong position at the mouth of the Big Sandy River and instead began work further down-stream at Fort Henry. Fort Henry had many geographical disadvantages. The Tennessee-Kentucky border was offset at the point where the Tennessee River flowed into Kentucky. Fort Henry was located on the east bank in Tennessee. The west bank of the river was in Kentucky. Since Kentucky's neutrality forbade the construction of defenses on the Kentucky side, this meant that Henry was not only vulnerable to an invasion from the north, but also from that part of Kentucky on the west bank.

The terrain surrounding the fort made for a poor defense. A range of hills on the west bank of the river commanded the few defensive works which were constructed when Johnston came to Tennessee in September. These hills were within 700 yards of the fort, and were 250 feet higher than the crest of the fort's parapet. North of the fort, on the west bank, another ridge commanded the fort. On the east bank, a line of hills north and west of Fort Henry were within easy rifle range. Captain Jesse Taylor, an experienced artillerist who visited Henry in early September, noted that in an ordinary February rise of the Tennessee, the highest point in the fort would be two feet under water, and the lower river batteries would be nine feet under water.
Taylor also noted that the line of communication between Forts Henry and Donelson was a solitary road which would be inundated by rising creeks in the spring rains. Colonel Adolphus Heiman, commander of the Fort Henry garrison in October, 1861, was also concerned about the geographical disadvantages of the fort. Heiman particularly criticized the method in which the fort's batteries had been mounted in the summer of 1861. All of the guns faced downstream, and had a range of only a mile and a half. Once a Federal boat ran under the guns, the fort was helpless and the boat would be free to steam upriver to Danville, where the vital Memphis, Clarksville, and Ohio Railroad crossed the Tennessee River. Ironically, both Taylor and Heiman warned State authorities of this danger just as the command of the forts was being transferred to Leonidas Polk. As will be seen, Polk filed these warnings away as he did many other warnings about the weakness of the inland forts. Thus, when Johnston assumed command, the gateway to the soft underbelly of the Heartland and the communication line between the western and central sectors of the Department were protected by an incomplete fort constructed below the high-water line and garrisoned by 870 men whose artillery would fire only in one direction. 33
Between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers, Johnston inherited the problems of an exterior line and of a large area of open terrain to be defended. Only a week before Johnston assumed command, Leonidas Polk, for various reasons to be discussed later, moved 12,000 men north to Columbus, Kentucky, to seize the railhead of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. This move left Johnston at a disadvantage, for while it prevented a Union move down the Mobile and Ohio line, it did not prevent a Federal advance down the parallel New Orleans and Ohio Railroad to Union City, Tennessee, twenty-five miles southeast of Columbus. Moreover, by holding both Columbus and Union City, the Confederate force was on an exterior line of communications, for Union City was twenty-five miles southeast of Columbus, and the Columbus garrison would have to face north and east to repel a Federal land attack.

Yet Union City must be held. It was the railhead of the Mobile and Ohio, the New Orleans and Ohio, and the Nashville and Northwestern Railroads. Should the Federals seize Union City, Columbus would be outflanked, a move could be made swiftly on Memphis, and communications with Middle Tennessee could be severed. Geography, however, made the defense of Union City difficult, and the area from Union City sixty miles east to the Tennessee
River was one of the weakest areas in the Confederate line. The level terrain of the Mississippi Plateau in West Tennessee which lay north of Union City did not provide geographical barriers to a Federal advance. North in Kentucky, on a line extending from Columbus east to Mayfield, there were a series of knobs which stretched across the Jackson Purchase. Had Polk extended his line to Mayfield, these ridges would have provided a natural barrier, but to the force on the Columbus-Union City line, these knobs and ridges only shielded Federal operations in West Kentucky. The salient at Union City remained vulnerable when Johnston arrived in Tennessee. Although Polk had 22,000 men in his force in September, 1861, only 1,400 of them were stationed on his right flank at Union City. The remainder were stationed at the Mississippi River forts at Memphis, Fort Harris, Fort Pillow, Island Number Ten, and Fort Wright. State authorities and Polk built these defenses in the summer of 1861. 34
3. Attitude

It was no accident that Johnston found that almost all of Polk's army was concentrated in the forts on the Mississippi River. Polk had succumbed to the pressure of the Mississippi River bloc, which was also part of the Heartland's legacy to Johnston. There was no such bloc of citizens who pressured for the defense of the Cumberland and the Tennessee in the center of the Heartland. The only pressure group in the area was on the western fringe, centered mainly at Memphis. This pressure bloc was the product of several factors, most of which were geographical. Despite Memphis' rapid growth between 1840 and 1860, during which time the population increased from about 2,000 to 23,000, the city Memphis never attained the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Nashville. Instead, it remained a frontier town filled with martial spirit. Probably because of the town's location on the Mississippi, Memphis citizens showed unusually strong interest in the Texas War for Independence, William Walker's escapades, and the territorial feud in Kansas. An unusually large number of local military outfits existed in Memphis throughout the 1850's before the Civil War. Even before Tennessee seceded, the town was an armed camp. Memphis merchants
had resolved in a unanimous vote that West Tennessee, regardless of the opinion of the rest of the state, should join the Confederacy. A powerful Committee of Public Safety was formed, military companies were organized, and local manufacturers contracted for war materials.  

The pressure of the river bloc was the product of something more than just the martial spirit of the river town. The people of Memphis, as well as those in the delta country further south, possessed an unusually strong fear of Federal invasion. This fear swelled into a chorus of demands for priority of Mississippi River defenses in State and Confederate appropriations. This chorus came from a conglomerate of businessmen, military officers, planters, and politicians. Sam Tate, president of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, repeatedly warned the Confederate government that the Valley would be overrun by Federals. Ordnance Officer J. T. Trezevant, stationed at Memphis, warned Polk that if Memphis fell, the entire Mississippi Valley would fall. The powerful Memphis Military Board badgered Polk, Albert Sidney Johnston, Jefferson Davis and others for more aid to Memphis. The Board was so influential in its efforts that it drew funds from the Legislature and it was permitted to issue orders in Polk’s
name while he commanded the Second Department.

No small element in this pressure group were the people who lived south of Memphis in the delta country. Throughout the war, the delta planters feared that a Union invasion would ignite a slave insurrection. Rumors of slave uprisings continually hindered Confederate recruiting in the river counties in Mississippi. When Nashville fell in 1862, panic gripped the slaveholders on the Mississippi. Gideon Pillow reported that "Great excitement here and depression in public mind" was commonplace. The spokesman for the Mississippi people was a bored general in the Mississippi State Army who sought escape from his dismal post in the Gulf Coast country. General C. G. Dahlgren pestered Confederate authorities in Tennessee in the summer of 1861 with grandiose ideas for river defense. Dahlgren's plans were absurd. One of his proposals called for an offensive into Kentucky by 100,000 well-equipped State troops supported by 100 pieces of field artillery, a floating battery, an interstate staff of generals, and, of course, General Dahlgren in command. Dahlgren's ideas may have been preposterous, but his influence and the influence of the entire river bloc, were felt in the summer of 1861. When Johnston arrived in Tennessee, the evidences of the pressure were seen in the dispersal of Polk's forces.
By September, 1861, five river forts manned by 18,000 men guarded the approach to Memphis: Forts Harris, Wright, Pillow, Columbus, and fortifications at Memphis. A sixth fort was in preparation at Island Number Ten. Between the Mississippi and the Tennessee, less than 2,000 troops blocked a land invasion of West Tennessee. Further east, the inland river defenses at Fort Henry and Donelson, not yet under Confederate supervision, remained incomplete.  

In the second week of September, Albert Sidney Johnston began his long trek through the Heartland to survey his new command, from Knoxville to Memphis and from Chattanooga to Columbus. There were other people, events, and ideas that were active during the spring and summer of 1861, all of which meant problems. The Heartland presented Johnston with its own peculiar set of difficulties. Johnston felt the awesome sense of responsibility for defending the food and munitions areas of the Heartland. Johnston found that he must defend an exterior line of some 430 miles, a line replete with weaknesses of terrain. He must combat the harrangues by organized pressure blocs demanding local defense. A Fifth Column in every section of the Heartland worked against defensive efforts. Johnston must face the lethargy of the people living in the Cumberland River
basin and must find some means of sealing off the river avenues leading to the vitals of the Heartland. Communications between the western, middle, and eastern sections of his department were dissected by three rivers and a mountain range. Finally, Johnston saw the necessity of defending every inch of territory from which the army must eat, procure its weapons, and fill its ranks. Such was the legacy given by the Heartland to the first General of the Army of Tennessee.
Notes


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25. Arnow, Seedtime, 13; Killebrew and Safford, Resources of Tennessee, 287.


L. Nichols, Confederate Engineers (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1957), 42-4.


31. Navigation of the Tennessee River, 59th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document Number 83, (Washington, 1906), pp. 20-21; L. M. Jones to Harris, Jan. 21, 1862, I. G. Harris, Tenn.; Harris to Johnston, Dec. 6, 1862, in NA, West. Dept. T.R., 1861; OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 888; D. C. Donohue, Special Agent for the Department of the Interior, reported from the Lower Tennessee river area after Forts Henry and Donelson were surrendered that "There is a marked change here ever since I arrived—on the union question....many of my old acquaintances...all concur in the opinion that the rebellion is doomed to a complete & speedy over throw...." Donohue to Hon. C. B. Smith, Feb. 28, 1862, in Truman Strobridge (ed.), "Letters of D. C. Donohue, Special Agent for the Procuring of Cotton Seed," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXI (December 1962), 379-80; see also Mary Campbell, Attitude of Tennesseans Toward the Union 1847-1861 (New York, 1961), 288-7, 292-3.

32. Wilbur Foster, "Building of Forts Henry and Donelson," in Bromfield Ridley (ed.), Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri, 1906), 65-6; Bushrod Johnson to Harris, June 11, 1861, Harris to A. S. Johnston, June 14, 1861 in I. G. Harris, Tenn.


35. Gerald M. Capers, Biography of a River Town; Memphis: Its Heroic Age (Chapel Hill, 1939), 143-4.


PART II

THE LEGACY OF THE SUMMER, 1861
THE LEGACY OF ISHAM HARRIS

The origins of the Army of Tennessee which Albert Sidney Johnston was to command were found in the activities of the Governor of Tennessee, Isham Harris, during the spring and summer of 1861. Harris was one of the most energetic war governors of the South. He not only led his State out of the Union, but proceeded to build the Provisional Army of Tennessee, one of the best organized State forces in the South. This army, which became the nucleus of Johnston's Army of Tennessee, possessed its own Engineer Corps, Ordnance Bureau, Quartermaster Department, and Commissary Department. Harris' energy did not cease with transferring this army of twenty-four regiments and ten artillery batteries to Confederate service. Between May and December of 1861, Harris organized more than seventy-one regiments for Confederate service. Indeed, by the close of the summer of 1861, he had succeeded in enlisting 100,000 men for State and Confederate duty. Harris was not only energetic, but was devoted to the Confederate effort. In the fall of 1861, he dutifully answered every call Johnston made for reinforcements, although other governors in the Second Department would fail to supply their quotas. Harris remained at Johnston's side even to the time when Johnston lay mortally wounded in
the glade near Shiloh Church. In fact, Harris served on the staff of every commander of the Army through every major battle in the War except Perryville.¹

Despite his energy and devotion to the secession cause, Isham Harris in the spring and summer of 1861 exhibited several weaknesses which did future harm to Albert Sidney Johnston. Harris had no military experience, yet attempted to devise a grand strategy for the State's defense without correlating his activities with the Confederate government. He possessed a naive trust in his own plans, as well as in officers who did not merit his trust. He was not so absorbed in the Confederate effort that he could forget that 1861 was an election year. Indeed, part of Harris' strategy which he devised for the State Army before the Confederates took charge in Tennessee was colored by political designs. Even the amazing energy which he showed in building the army was often misdirected and did more future harm than good. Sincere though he was, Harris left for Johnston a legacy of difficult problems.

Had the Governor possessed little control over military operations before Johnston came to Tennessee, these problems might have been less difficult to overcome. But the Governor held four positions of leadership in the spring and summer of 1861, and in each position,
he caused future trouble to Johnston, which would remain with the Army of Tennessee even to the last stand at Bentonville. Harris was the leader of the move for an Independent Tennessee in the spring of 1861. In May and June, 1861, he built the nucleus of the Army of Tennessee, the State Army. During the summer of 1861, Harris was Commander-in-Chief of State forces before they were transferred to Confederate service. In July and August, 1861, Harris actually served as commander of Middle and East Tennessee defenses, while these portions of the State were not yet under Confederate jurisdiction.
1. The Independent State of Tennessee

The drive to carry Tennessee out of the Federal Union had a strong influence upon the problems of Albert Sidney Johnston. In February, Tennessee voters had rejected the proposal to call a convention for considering secession. Anxious to bring the State into the Confederacy, the secession bloc led by Harris, Felix Zollicoffer, Gustavus Henry of Clarksville and others, devised the clever strategy of placing the State in an isolated condition, neither in the Union nor in the Confederacy. Their strategy was to isolate Tennessee from the Union by severing relations with the Federal government without actually seceding. Then the populace was to be convinced that an Independent Tennessee faced danger, but that there was safety in the Confederacy.

In a speech to the legislature on April 25, Harris began to pressure for an Independent Tennessee. He called for a Declaration of Independence from the Union, and, for the benefit of Constitutionalists in the audience, he argued that the Lincoln government had so perverted the Constitution that the Union "established by our fathers" no longer existed. The Governor urged that the people of Tennessee "formally declare their connection with the remaining states of the Union dissolved."
On May 6, the legislature complied by passing the "Declaration of Independence and Ordinance" from the Union. This declaration was subject to ratification by the populace on June 8. The secessionists were careful to keep "Independent Tennessee" and "Tennessee in the Confederacy" as separate ideas, at least, superficially. Thus, they authorized a second vote to be taken on the same date to determine whether, if independence were ratified, Tennessee should accept the Constitution of the Confederate States. As Confederate Commissioner Henry Hilliard explained to Confederate Secretary of State Robert Toombs, the object of having the separate ordinance was to secure "beyond all possibility of doubt the speedy secession of Tennessee from the Government of the United States."  

This strategy of forming an Independent Tennessee with its ultimate entrance into the Confederacy and the methods utilized to insure the success of the project were to influence military affairs. First, the secessionists played on the fear of an invasion down the Mississippi River in order to emphasize the isolated condition of Tennessee as a border state. On April 29, the House resolved to authorize the Governor to send such aid as he deemed advisable to protect the city of Columbus, Kentucky, from a Federal invasion down the
Mississippi. On May 3, the Senate struck at the fear of an invasion through the area between the Mississippi and the Tennessee, and urged that an armed force be sent to Union City "In view of the large number of Black Republican troops now in the occupation of the city of Cairo, Illinois." On May 8, the House capitalized on the seizure at Cairo, Illinois, of a boat owned by a Tennessee firm, and aroused the old fear of interference with the free navigation of the Mississippi. On May 9, a special joint committee of the House and Senate, in a Harris-sponsored statement designed to explain why the legislature had entered into a Military League with the Confederates, stressed the exposed condition of West Tennessee. The committee warned that "the towns and counties hovering on the Mississippi River were liable to be assailed at any hour by the armed forces collected at Cairo...." Perhaps, in attempting to stress the weakness of the Mississippi River line as a reason for joining the Confederacy, the legislature itself had become intrigued with the defense of the Mississippi. On June 22, long after Tennessee had seceded and the need to instill a fear of river invasion in the voter's heart had ceased, the legislature was petitioning the Confederate Congress for large appropriations "to prevent a possible descent upon the Mississippi river...." Hence, a device used by
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secession leaders to frighten voters into accepting the Confederacy actually frightened the leaders themselves. The fears of a Mississippi River invasion that were planted by politicians in 1861 were a major source of the Mississippi River bloc which was to hamper Johnston's efforts.³

The second step in the move for an Independent Tennessee was the signing of a Military League between the State and the Confederacy. On May 7, representatives of Harris met with Commissioner Hilliard, and agreed upon a Military League, which was ratified the same day by the State Legislature. The strategy of the move was to place the state just far enough into the Confederacy to make it difficult for the voters to refuse secession in June. Yet the state must officially remain out of the Confederacy so that the populace would not think that the legislature had done what voters had refused to do in the February referendum. Under the agreement, the military force of Tennessee would be controlled by the Confederate government "in the impending conflict with the United States...."⁴

The deliberately hasty action of Tennessee authorities in entering the Military League was also to influence Johnston's army. For the strategy boomeranged upon its designers, and they found they were more outside than
inside the Confederacy. The result was the creation of an arms dilemma which plagued the army even in Johnston's command. Under the terms of the League, both the Confederate and State governments were to provide for Tennessee's common defense. Yet Confederate command was not established in Tennessee until July. Until then, the responsibility for defending the buffer zone of Tennessee fell upon State authorities and in May, the State Army was in no position to defend the territory which the State government had committed itself to defend for the Confederacy. In 1857, the State Militia had been abolished, and as late as January, 1861, Harris reported "...we have no military organization in the State." Thus, Harris would have to build a State Army in order to defend the territory which had declared itself under Confederate military jurisdiction.

The real dilemma, however, appeared with the arms situation in Tennessee. In his attempts to persuade Tennessee to enter the League, Confederate Commissioner Hilliard had promised that as soon as the Confederate government ratified the League, Tennessee would be supplied with arms enough "to put the State on a war footing." These arms were vital, for not only must Harris defend a territory some 480 miles wide with a nonexistent army, but also, the State had no arms with which to equip any
force at all. Tennessee had no Federal Arsenal from which to seize arms, and the antique weapons in the State arsenal would not have beaten off an Indian assault. The public arms consisted of a motley collection of about 8,000 flintlock muskets of which more than half were damaged, 185 percussion muskets, 350 badly damaged Hall's carbines, and various other small arms. The artillery boasted one six-pound, unserviceable iron gun, one damaged twelve-pound bronze piece, and two other six-pounders. The arsenal did not even have a complete set of tools for converting flintlock arms to percussion arms. Five days after the Military League was agreed upon, the total amount of small arms in the Nashville arsenal consisted of 8,000 muskets, of which 7,000 were labeled as unfit for use.

The Confederacy was slow to send arms, and State General S. R. Anderson complained bitterly to Secretary of War Leroy Walker concerning the delay. The State authorities felt cheated. Indeed, they had gone farther out on the limb than they had intended, and were now faced with a genuine arms shortage. Volunteers could be obtained easily. By May 1, seventy companies had volunteered and the Military Board predicted that 25,000 men would volunteer in May and June. But the State had no arms for them. The State had taken a
direct step away from the Union, and yet was not being supported by the Confederacy. On May 25, Governor Harris complained to Walker that the raising of troops was no problem, but that the State could not arm even the token regiments which had volunteered.  

By the end of May, the arms situation had become more serious. Finally, the Confederate government sent 4,000 muskets to arm the troops in Tennessee. Yet Richmond stipulated that these muskets were to be used only by regiments which were to be mustered into Confederate service, and that they were not to be used by regiments organized only for defense of the State. Harris complained bitterly to Gideon Pillow that he felt "much embarrassed with the unreasonable restrictions imposed on the distribution of the 4,000 guns sent us by the Confederate States." Harris urged that Walker relent by allowing State troops to be armed with the Confederate weapons, but Walker refused. Again, the secession group found themselves in trouble. In the spring campaign for an Independent Tennessee, the secessionists had stressed to the people of the State the need for home defense, and a committee of the state legislature had printed thousands of circulars warning that Tennessee was menaced "by armies of alarming magnitude." The result was that many regiments which volunteered for State service refused
to go into Confederate service. On May 28, Harris confessed to Walker that he could not induce a single regiment to go into Confederate service. The only alternative was to raise troops especially for Confederate service, while the Confederate weapons lay idle. Meanwhile, Harris reported that he had "several thousand men organized and ready for the field...but unarmed."^7

The arms situation grew more serious. Not only were the arms sent to Tennessee designated for Confederate troops only, but the regiments first armed were sent to the Virginia front. Some companies in Tennessee not only refused to serve beyond the borders of the state, but also would not serve at all unless they received the same equipment as those going to Virginia. Some regiments, such as Ed Pickett's regiment at Camp Brown, fretted at the delay in receiving arms, and the general morale of the State troops suffered because of the lack of arms. Hence, in May, 1861, Harris' force consisted of State regiments that refused to leave the borders of the state, regiments which were unwilling to join the Confederate army under any circumstances, Confederate regiments which were promptly shipped elsewhere, and State regiments which gladly would have seen Confederate service if arms had been made available.
The only helpful suggestion received from the Confederate government was that Harris should attempt to arm his troops with the country rifle, since "many of your citizens are habituated to the use of the Rifle." Leroy Walker pointed out that it was the rifle which won victory for Tennessee at King's Mountain. The only trouble was that most of the country rifles in Tennessee were old enough to have been at the battle of King's Mountain. Some of the State Arsenal's weapons had been deposited there as early as 1808. Many State troops were armed with old Tower of London muskets used in the War of 1812. Also, the country rifles were made in many calibers, and were in need of repair. The State Arsenal did not have the facilities to do the alteration and repair work needed for these fireplace decorations that were optimistically described by Walker as "fatal and successful on the field of battle...."8

The failure of the Confederate government to provide ample arms as promised, and the Government's unwillingness to arm Harris' State regiments with Confederate arms would prove to be the key factors in explaining the weakness of the defensive line of Gideon Pillow's State army in the summer of 1861. The arms problem foreshadowed a similar problem Johnston would face in the fall of 1861, in that Harris' state army looked impressive on paper but
was almost totally unmanned. 9

A third factor which would later influence Johnston's army was that the secession party leaders were forced to cater to the State legislature in measures of military defense, in order to gain support for an Independent Tennessee. Pivotal blocs were given special consideration. In the February referendum, Nashville and Davidson County as well as adjacent counties had not supported the secession move. To gain this region's support in the drive for an Independent Tennessee, the secession group helped to establish the myth of the security and invincibility of Nashville. On the same day that the agreement with the Military League was ratified, the Tennessee House and Senate passed a resolution inviting the Confederate government to make Nashville the capital, provided Tennessee voted to secede. Memphis was also important to Isham Harris because his secession attempt had received strong support from influential Memphis Whig business men. Because of this support, the State Military and Financial Board and the Tennessee Legislature gave Memphis officials free rein on military spending. Such concessions only served to strengthen the powerful river bloc which Johnston faced.

As well as catering to certain sections in order to gain support, the proponents of the Independent State
who were in the legislature wasted the military authorities' time by toying with various fads. Resolutions were introduced proposing that the Confederate flag, inscribed with the State coat of arms, be flown over the capitol. Some delegates suggested that Harris should offer infantry support to the Governor of Maryland in order to "protect the people from the aggression of the hordes of Black Republicans." Quack inventors who had friends in the legislature urged that the State army adopt such items as three-barrelled cannon and infantry breastplates. Even serious efforts hampered the successful building of an army by Harris and his aides. State legislators became military experts overnight, with the result that there were soon more Generals in the chambers than in the camps. Each member of the legislature was armed with a copy of William J. Hardee's treatise on tactics. The enthusiastic legislators established an unnecessary Committee on Military Affairs which continually plied the Military and Financial Board with useless questions. 10

All of this activity was not just patriotic interest. Part of the interest was mercenary, and secessionists had to see the favor of the more financially inclined legislators. In 1861, Tennessee was in the midst of a depression caused by two consecutive years of drought, a
lapse in river trade with the Upper Mississippi Valley, and bank failures within the state. Thus, it was thought that the mass production of war munitions might restore the depressed economy of the state. The contract system, a joint product of the legislature and the Military and Financial Board, also probably involved some element of financial gain. On April 26, 1861, the legislature instructed the governor to contract with private firms and individuals for arms, munitions, and other equipment. By October 1, the Military Board alone had reported twenty-four advances paid on contracts to firms and individuals. There were probably twice this number not recorded on an individual basis, but handled through the general appropriation fund. Even local military units which spent too much for munitions were given financial aid, provided they were in politically strategic areas such as Memphis and Nashville. The secession bloc's need for hasty support from the legislature led to the granting of many such concessions in the spring of 1861.

Another serious result of the efforts to form an Independent Tennessee was the general lack of rapport between State and Confederate officials. This lack of communication had already helped to create the arms dilemma. The hasty formation of the Military League produced another serious problem, the lack of prior
agreement as to the methods of transferring the State army to Confederate service. The Military League agreement contained no specific provisions to guide the transfer, but evidently Harris and the war party assumed that as soon as the citizens voted to secede on June 8, the Confederates would assume command and responsibility for the State regiments.

The Tennessee officials soon found they were mistaken. The Confederates were slow to assume such authority, and Tennessee was in a more isolated condition than the secession party had intended. As early as June 18, the legislature authorized Harris to place the Provisional Army of the State at the disposal of the Confederacy. On June 27, the legislature became impatient and inquired "Whether the Provisional Army of Tennessee is now a part of the forces of the Confederate States; and if not, on what footing the same now stands..." On June 29, the legislature asked the governor to make arrangements for placing the army under Confederate control, to see that the troops were mustered into Confederate service so that arms could be procured, and to insure that the State's defense would come under Confederate direction. Harris dispatched a note to Jefferson Davis concerning these matters, but on June 30, he complained that he had received no answer from Davis. On July 2,
determined to obtain Confederate support, Harris formally tendered the Provisional Army of the State to the Confederacy. Even then, Harris was not sure that the Army would be accepted, for he added that "Tennessee makes this tender with the hope that it will be accepted by Your Excellency...." 12

The failure, however, to work out a transfer system produced a delay in transfer which crippled defensive efforts in Tennessee. Leonidas Polk did not assume command in Tennessee of the Confederate Second Department until July 13, and the transference of the Army did not begin until July 31. Then followed a long and tedious process. Confederate officers had to travel to each camp and outpost of State troops, receive a muster roll of each regiment, battalion and company, and formally muster them into Confederate service. The process was so awkward and slow that the troops in East Kentucky commanded by General Zollicoffer, and the forces stationed in East Tennessee were not mustered into Confederate service until the end of October.

Once more, Tennessee was in and out of the Confederacy. Although technically all State troops were placed under the command of Confederate authorities on July 31, the limits of Polk's command did not include Middle and East Tennessee. During the summer of 1861, this section of
the line had to be personally superintended by Harris. Moreover, this part of the line was manned by State troops not yet mustered into the Confederate service, but vaguely considered to be a part of the Confederate force. Since they were State regiments, they must therefore procure their arms and pay from the State. But Tennessee stopped paying its Provisional Army on July 31, the official date of transfer. The result was that these troops of the no man's land of Middle and East Tennessee were forced to go through the summer without pay. Not until October 16, could Johnston's adjutant, W. W. Mackall, report that the Confederate War Department had decided to pay Tennessee troops for their service since July 31.

By then the damage had been done. On September 28, Harris complained to Judah Benjamin that no Confederate pay had reached these troops, and that the State had been forced to pay advances out of a treasury already depleted by the expenditure of $5,000,000 on the State army. The morale and the effectiveness of the volunteers who waited idly at training camps from Camp Brown at Union City to Camp Cummings at Knoxville were crippled because of the Confederates' failure to provide them with promised weapons and pay. Many soldiers drilled with sticks as they waited for the promised arms that never
arrived. A riot almost resulted at Camp Cheatham in Middle Tennessee when one regiment learned that they would not receive arms. The *esprit de corps* of the State Army was not improved by the interval of approximately two months during which the unarmed volunteers were paid by neither the State nor the Confederacy.  

The failure to work out a system of transfer created additional problems. Harris and his party failed to make arrangements for the transference to the Confederacy of the general officers and of the various departments of the State Army. What was to be done with the commissary and ordnance stores accumulated at Nashville, and with the State Ordnance Bureau laboratories of Captain Moses H. Wright? What disposition would be made of the Engineer Corps, the Surgeon-General's Department, the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments, and the Adjutant General's Department? Who would finance the outstanding contracts of the Military Board? Would the Board be reimbursed for the $4,000,000 worth of equipment that it had purchased for the Army by September 6? What would be the disposition of the high command of the State Army, especially the sensitive commander-in-chief, Major-General Gideon Pillow?

In his haste to isolate Tennessee from the Union, Harris did not take the time to reach an agreement with
the Confederacy on these matters. This failure was to injure Albert Sidney Johnston's defensive efforts. If the Provisional Army were to be the backbone of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, orderly transference of arms and men was essential. Since this transfer was not orderly, both delay and ill will resulted. Not until September 16, after Johnston had assumed command, was a deed drawn up for the transference of commissary and ordnance stores, and Quartermaster Kensey Johns admitted to Secretary of War Leroy Walker that it would still be weeks before the transfer would be completed. Even then there was no guarantee that contracts of the Military Board that had been outstanding but not executed before July 31 would be honored.

No provisions were made for the acceptance into Confederate service of certain fine departments of the State army. Walker stated that such departments would "be displaced by the transfer...." Had this displacement been complete, Johnston would have had serious difficulties indeed. The Surgeon-General's Department of the State army was one of the best in the Confederacy. The Quartermaster General, V. K. Stevenson, was chiefly responsible for the millions of dollars in stores accumulated at Nashville, Memphis, and Knoxville depots. The Captain of Ordnance, Moses Wright, had armed the
Provisional Army, sped the manufacture of gunpowder and production of munitions. Fortunately, all of these vital personnel were retained by Johnston, but their retention was accomplished in spite of and not because of the manner of transfer. No formal agreement to transfer such departments was ever made, nor were these men received into Confederate service at any designated time. Instead, they were usually retained on an informal basis as a result of the pleas of Harris, Polk, or other officials.14

The failure of Harris to arrange a transfer policy for the high command produced a personality conflict which would plague Johnston until the surrender of Fort Donelson. As commander of the State army, Gideon Pillow held the rank of Major General. Vain and overstuffed, Pillow in later months would clash with his own State officers, Leonidas Polk, Johnston, and almost everyone else who crossed his path. In July, Pillow was informed that under the terms of the transfer, he would hold the rank of a brigadier general in the Confederate Army.

This demotion came as a surprise, for nothing about comparative ranks had been mentioned in the Military League agreement. Pillow bitterly argued with Harris that the Governor should not place the State force in Confederate service, "beyond your control without knowing
who are to be its commanders...." Pillow maintained that in the agreement to transfer the State forces, the term "forces" should be interpreted to mean the aggregate body of the General Staff and the Army Corps. He informed Harris that he would accept the rank of brigadier general, "the lowest grade of general officers in the Confederate army...," but would prefer "the position of a soldier in the ranks...." Selfish though his motives may have been, Pillow's argument concerning the interpretation of the transfer had some merit. His protests only emphasized the lack of forethought by Harris as to a transfer policy. The dispute over Pillow's rank left an open wound in the high command of the Tennessee army. By the time of Johnston's arrival, this wound was a deep, permanent scar.15

The existence of the Independent State was brief, but its legacy to the Army of Tennessee was significant. The efforts to isolate Tennessee and then to lead the State into the Confederacy focused the public mind on the danger of a Mississippi River invasion. The lack of understanding in the Military League created an arms dilemma which Harris attempted to erase during the summer of 1861, but Johnston himself would not be able to solve this problem. The lack of a prearranged transfer policy fostered discontent in the high command of the
State Army as well as in the ranks. In his eagerness to place Tennessee near the Confederacy, Harris had given little thought to the problems that would arise when Tennessee, for all purposes, was in neither the Union nor the Confederacy. Hence, the political strategy of the spring of 1861 laid the foundation for problems Johnston would face in September.
2. The Molding of the State Army

Historians would later pay little attention to the second position of leadership which Harris assumed in the late spring of 1861, although that position was to have a great influence on the future of the Army of Tennessee. From April to July, 1861, Isham Harris pieced together the Provisional State Army of Tennessee, the nucleus of Johnston's Army of Tennessee. Indeed, many of the organizational problems which the Army of Tennessee faced in the autumn of 1861 can be traced to the manner in which the parent organization, the State Army, was constructed.

The first legacy of the State Army to Johnston was that Harris' force was actually much weaker than public reports indicated. On the surface, Harris' swift efforts to raise a State force were indeed impressive. After Harris pleaded with the Legislature on April 25 to put the State on a war footing, more than seventy companies volunteered for service. By May 9, 5,000 men were in the State Army, and commanding General Gideon Pillow boasted that by June 1 the number would be increased fivefold. When Harris tendered the Provisional Army to Jefferson Davis on July 2, he boasted that the twenty-two regiments of infantry and
the two cavalry regiments were "fully armed and equipped ready for the field...." On August 11, the State Adjutant General, James McHenry, informed R. H. Chilton in Richmond that Tennessee had already raised thirty-two regiments for Confederate service. On October 7, Harris reported this number had been increased to thirty-eight regiments of infantry, seven cavalry battalions, and thirty-eight artillery companies. By December, 1861, Harris had reported to Richmond that seventy-one regiments, twenty-one cavalry regiments, and twenty-two artillery batteries had been organized in Tennessee.

However, this force was a "paper army," one that was much stronger on muster rolls than in the field. This deceptive strength of the Provisional Army was due both to the manner in which the force was organized, and to the condition of arms in the State Army. Harris formed the State Army from the militia, scattered companies that volunteered independently, troops who entered service under the Army Bill of May 6, and a reserve force of militia that did not enter active service. Technically, every white male in the state between the ages of eighteen and forty-five was in the militia, and there were supposedly 152 regiments of the militia in the state. In April, 1862, however, when Militia Division
Commanders S. R. Anderson, B. F. Cheatham, and Gideon Pillow began calling for volunteer companies, the 152 regiments were far from being organized because the militia had just been reorganized in January. Various companies, some of which belonged in the militia, began drifting into recruiting centers. Instead of keeping these independent units in their rightful place in the militia, the State authorities welcomed these volunteers.

By April 26, sixteen companies were stationed at Nashville. Other potential militia units gathered at Union City, Randolph, Camp Trousdale in Sumner County, and Camp Cheatham in Robertson County. More than twenty-five companies encamped at Knoxville, while other companies rendezvoused at Chattanooga.

Simultaneously with the call for volunteer companies and for putting the militia on a war footing, came the Army Bill of May 6, 1861. This bill supposedly provided the nucleus of the Provisional Army. Under the terms of the bill, the State called for a force of 55,000 volunteers, 25,000 of whom were to be armed while the remaining 30,000 were to be held in reserve. The entire force would be organized into regiments, brigades and divisions to be commanded by the senior major general.

Enthused by the response to the Army Bill, Harris
developed new areas of troop resources. In June, a statewide plea went out to county courts to organize local Home Guard Units. On June 24, Harris announced that the State would receive into service every man who would volunteer. Harris expressed his policy of building the State Army in a letter to Gideon Pillow:
"I have mustered into State service every company which presented itself for that purpose..." By this immense drive, almost a levy en masse, Harris actually crippled the later efforts of Johnston to raise forces, because the State Army appeared to be much larger than it actually was. For example, a person could be simultaneously a member of the militia, of an independent company, of a State regiment, and of the reserve corps. Except for the Army Bill, which was an excellent effort at organizing the logistical branches of the army, there was no uniform plan for raising troops. Men who went into service early in April as members of an independent company might be recounted when regiments were organized or transferred to Confederate service. 17

In the course of transferring the Army to Confederate service, still another opportunity was presented to misconstrue the size of Harris' force. Many of the State regiments were consolidated, once they were in the Confederate service. These regiments had different names
on the roster. For example, Colonel William Carroll's First East Tennessee Rifles was also the Thirty-seventh Tennessee, as well as the Seventh Regiment of the Provisional Army. Hill's Fifth Infantry Regiment of the Provisional Army was also referred to as the Thirty-fifth Infantry Regiment. The Forty-third Infantry Regiment was also the Fifth East Tennessee Volunteers, and later, the Mounted Infantry.

Unless someone in the War Department at Richmond kept close watch on the numbering of the Provisional Army's regiments during its transfer to the Confederate Army of Tennessee, several regiments might be registered that did not exist, or might disappear from the records entirely. In November, for example, the Adjutant General's office in Richmond lost count of the organized Tennessee regiments that were numbered between the Twenty-ninth and the Fortieth Regiments. Furthermore, the office requested that any Tennessee regiments which Harris chose to organize should begin their numbering after forty-one, regardless of whether the gap between twenty-nine and forty-one had been filled. In exasperation, V. D. Groner of the Adjutant General's office in Richmond, asked Harris:

> You will confer a great favor by informing us of regiments formed by you and turned over to the Confederate States, as frequently months elapse before the muster-rolls are received, and regiments are in existence before we know it.
Acting Assistant State Adjutant General W. C. Whitthorne could do no better. In November he confessed to Harris that he did not have a record of seven State regiments mustered into Confederate service, although he knew these regiments existed because he knew their commanders by name. The records of these regiments had been misplaced among the morass of paper work involved in the transfer of the State Army to the Confederate ranks. 18

The lack of criteria for the organization of divisions and brigades in the Provisional Army also helped to produce an overestimate of size. The Tennessee regiments were careless in their usage of the terms "division" and "brigade." In September, 1861, Polk reported that his Tennessee troops consisted of four brigades, but later he reported that they were comprised of three divisions. Polk's entire command structure was so disorganized that in December, 1861, he confessed to Johnston that he did not know just how many men he did have in his forces. When General P. G. T. Beauregard arrived at Polk's headquarters in January, 1862, he found that a serious miscalculation had been made. The lack of standardization which originated in the State Army made Polk's corps appear stronger than it was. For example, Polk's third division was actually little more than a brigade of four regiments, plus an additional regiment.
Also, there was no consistent number of men in each of the twenty-two regiments which Harris proudly presented to Jefferson Davis in July, 1861. Colonel Taz Newman's regiment at Camp Trousdale numbered 914 men, but Lucius Walker's regiment at Fort Wright numbered only 541 men. At Trousdale, Colonel John Savage's regiment listed 952 men, but Colonel Adolphus Heiman's regiment at Fort Henry boasted only 720 men. In July, none of the regiments of the Provisional Army was up to the generally accepted quota of 1,000 men. Only two regiments had more than 900 men. These inconsistencies were partially responsible for the Central Government's later overestimation of Johnston's force. 19

The most serious weakness of the army, however, lay in its lack of armed men. In late May, 1861, Harris reported to Leroy Walker that several thousand troops in the Provisional Army had no arms whatsoever. In mid-May, Gideon Pillow complained to Jefferson Davis that 25,000 troops could be put in the field in less than two weeks if sufficient weapons were available. Even Henry Hilliard, the smooth-talking Confederate Commissioner who had promised the arms that never arrived, told Robert Toombs in May that 50,000 troops could take the field in Tennessee if small arms were available.

Even those Tennessee regiments which were reported
as "equipped" actually had inferior weapons. The best armed regiment had flintlock muskets. Sixteen of the twenty-two regiments which Harris boasted to Davis as being fully equipped, were armed with the flintlocks. In dry weather, these weapons were fairly adequate, but the flintlocks were useless in rainy weather. The weakness of the firepower of regiments armed with flintlocks was to be seen later at Mill Springs, where most of Felix Zollicoffer's troops, armed with flintlocks, found their guns were useless on the rainswept battlefield. The primary source of the arms which Harris managed to obtain was the supply in the State Arsenal at Nashville. These weapons were both old and in need of repair. The chief ordnance officer at Memphis, W. R. Hunt, was able to collect only 800 old rifles and double-barreled shotguns, all of which were broken. Field artillery was nonexistent in the State Army. Harris was able to obtain a large number of guns for river defense, but no field pieces.

Despite the serious underlying weakness of the Provisional Army, Harris did manage to hand over to Confederate authorities a compact force. The Quartermaster General's Department was organized under the command of Vernon Stevenson, President of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. By August 1, Stevenson's efforts to accumulate
stores at Nashville had been so successful that Harris urged that Nashville continue to be the general depot for Rebel stores in the West. The entire department was transferred to Johnston's army. By October 1, Stevenson had expended more than $1,650,000 in the establishment of clothing and shoe factories at Nashville and Memphis, in the manufacture of saddles, knapsacks, harness, and other supplies at Nashville.  

The Army Bill of May 6, 1861, provided for an Ordnance Bureau of the State, and Harris appointed Moses H. Wright as Captain of Ordnance. In the summer of 1861, Wright was directly responsible for the manufacture of arms and cannon for the State Army, for the organization of a system to repair arms, for the establishment at Nashville of factories to prepare ammunition and percussion caps for the entire Confederacy, and for the development within the Nashville area of the powder mills which supplied the entire Confederacy. In August, General Polk, recognizing the value of this officer, mustered into Confederate service the entire Ordnance Bureau of Tennessee. Wright would be of invaluable service as he continued his work under Polk and Johnston as head of the Ordnance Laboratory at Nashville.

The Engineer Corps and the Miners and Sappers Corps of the State Army were also transferred into the Confederate
service. The commander of the Engineer Corps, Bushrod Johnson, was a former college professor and professional soldier who had fought from Florida to Vera Cruz. Johnson was responsible for the unfortunate selection of the site of Fort Henry, and worked on that project during the summer of 1861. Although his choice was poor, Johnson was at least concerned with inland river defense, a subject usually ignored during that summer. Johnson served well in the Army of Tennessee. He was captured at Donelson, exchanged and wounded at Shiloh, and was outstanding in the charges of Hardee's corps at Perryville and Murfreesboro. "Old Bushrod" eventually rose to the rank of major general in the Army. 23

Like the Engineer Corps, the Artillery Corps of the Provisional Army was headed by an officer who distinguished himself in infantry service. In June, 1861, John McCown had the misfortune to command a corps that had eight organized field batteries but no guns. A veteran of both the Seminole and Mexican Wars, McCown later served as a division commander under E. Kirby-Smith, and at Murfreesboro under Hardee. The Major of the Artillery Corps, Alexander P. L. Stewart commanded Polk's river batteries at Columbus. Stewart was later a corps commander under Joseph E. Johnston and John B. Hood. 24

An unheralded but vital contribution of the Provisional
Army to the Confederate Army was Harris' establishment of the Medical Board of Tennessee and the office of Surgeon-General. Under the vigorous leadership of Surgeon-General B. W. Avent, surgeons and assistant surgeons were assigned to each State regiment. During the summer of 1861, hospitals were established throughout Tennessee. The buildings of the old Insane Asylum at Nashville were commandeered by the Medical Board. At Memphis, the Sisters' Hospital was converted into the General Military Hospital. In Knoxville in early September, the Board worked to provide facilities for Zollicoffer's column which was fast advancing on Cumberland Gap. In this instance, the facilities of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum were leased to be used as a military hospital. When Johnston assumed command, he found an intact, efficient medical department. He would need such a department when the rain-swollen waters of the Cumberland Basin flooded the camps along the Barren River line in the winter of 1861-1862.\(^\text{25}\)

The Army of Tennessee would not only assimilate the departments of the State Army, but many of its general officers as well. Harris had appointed his State generals with an eye to the political situation. Although a Democrat, Harris had won the governorship in 1857 and again in 1859 with the help of Whig elements in
Memphis and Nashville. Thus, he was careful to give
the Whigs representation on the State's general staff,
for he wrote Jefferson Davis that "It is a political
necessity...that the Whig element be fully recognized."
Although the two major generals, Gideon Pillow and S. R.
Anderson, were Democrats, four of the five brigadier
generals, Felix Zollicoffer, W. R. Caswell, John Sneed,
and Robert Foster, were Whigs. Benjamin F. Cheatham
was the sole Democrat among the brigadiers. Since most
of the appointments were political, several of the officers
proved to be either incompetents or troublemakers. Caswell
and Foster were not effective leaders. Pillow, angry at
the reduction of his rank when transferred to Confederate
service, became a troublemaker for Johnston. The only
generals in the lot who distinguished themselves in
Johnston's army were Zollicoffer and Cheatham. Until his
career was ended by untimely death at Mill Springs,
Zollicoffer performed ably as commander of the right wing
in Tennessee. Cheatham, a tenacious fighter, would even-
tually rise to the rank of Major General and Corps Commander
in the Army of Tennessee and would fight in every major
battle of the Army except Jonesboro, Georgia.

Although few of the general officers of the State
Army distinguished themselves in the Army of Tennessee,
this failure itself was an indication of an important
influence which the State Army had on Johnston's force. During the War, the Army of Tennessee would be characterized by weakness, bitter conflict, and constant turnover among the commanding generals and corps commanders. Constant defeat and the absence of any solidity of command among the high echelons of the Army might have wrecked the Army's morale had it not been for the *esprit de corps* which the Army of Tennessee maintained at division, brigade, and regimental levels. This *esprit* literally kept the Army on its feet through ignominious defeats and countless breakdowns at the high command level, and perhaps explains why the army managed to maintain an *elan* to a degree probably not achieved by any other army in the War.

The roots of this decentralized army *esprit* originated in two characteristics of the State Army. Harris furnished the Army of Tennessee with many of the regimental and brigade commanders who were to keep up the Army's morale. In the State Army, these officers were usually staff officers or on the regimental line. The Adjutant-General, Daniel Donelson, would command a brigade in the Army of Tennessee and help smash the Federal line at Perryville and Murfreesboro. John C. Brown, Colonel of the Third State Infantry, and later a division commander in the Army of Tennessee, would be one of the most respected and
beloved line officers in the Western army. George Gordon, drillmaster of the Eleventh Tennessee Infantry, would command a brigade in the Atlanta campaign and personally lead his men in the suicidal charge at Franklin. Adolphus Heiman, Assistant Adjutant-General, would command the Sons of Erin, the Tenth Tennessee Infantry, which was one of the most individualistic and colorful outfits in the entire Confederacy. 27

The other source of the Army of Tennessee's peculiar spirit was the manner in which the regiments of the State Army were organized in the spring of 1861. The State regiments, organized on the structure of the 1840 militia law, were formed on a county basis, and individual companies were made up of citizens from the same community. The companies and the regiment as a whole became the object of community pride. Before the regiments marched off to war, they were feted with rounds of speeches by local politicians, the invariable presentation of the regimental flag by the local belle of the community, band serenades, and fried chicken. Once in camp, the chickens and the belles were few, mud and sickness were abundant, but the local boys never lost touch with the people back home. Since most Tennessee regiments were transferred into the Army of Tennessee instead of some distant army, home was not far away. Furthermore, regimental commanders such as
C. D. Venable, John C. Brown, and B. J. Hill, watched over their commands in a fatherly fashion. The result was the cementing of a regimental pride which began to take shape in the State Army in the summer of 1861. The important thing to these troops was not the State Army nor Gideon Pillow, its commander, but the local units. The Dixie Rifles, Secession Guards, Maury Braves, and Forked Deer Rifles were only a few of the many units which had developed a company and regimental elan even before being transferred to Confederate service. As the War progressed, this local elan would grow to brigade and division level. Soldiers did not fight for Braxton Bragg, John Bell Hood, or even a corps commander. They fought for outfits such as Pat Cleburne's division, the only division in Confederate service allowed to carry its own individualistic "Silver Moon" flag into battle.  

The Army which Isham Harris constructed was a mixture of strength and weakness. The State Army provided Johnston with a ready made logistical service, and with an innate regimental pride. Yet the army was weakened by lack of arms and by misconception of its own strength.
3. Isham Harris as Commander-in-Chief

Since General Leonidas Polk did not come to Tennessee until July, 1861, to command the Second Department, Harris himself took over the duties of Commander-in-Chief in Tennessee. During May, June and the first part of July, Confederate authorities and Harris did not agree on what the Governor was to do with the State Army. Left on his own, Harris dabbled in military strategy with unfortunate results. During his period of command, the Governor instituted four strategic policies in Tennessee which were later to cripple Johnston's efforts to defend the State.

Harris' first move was to commit firmly the State Army to the defense of the Mississippi River, while he neglected the defense of the inland rivers. In the move to get Tennessee into the Confederacy, Harris and his secession group had effectively used the danger of a Federal advance down the Mississippi as a reason for joining the Confederacy. Now that he was in command, he found he must back up the pledges to defend the river that were made in the spring. This was easy for Harris, for he personally was committed to the idea that the great danger of invasion lay in West Tennessee. As early as May 25, he wrote Gideon Pillow that "the settled
purpose of the Federal government is to attempt to
descend the Mississippi river...." Pillow's influence
was another reason for Harris' fixation on the Mississippi.
The Governor placed great trust in Pillow, and on May 24,
authorized him to "take such steps as you may determine
to be most certain in protecting the territory of
Tennessee from invasion." Pillow was only too happy to
have this free rein. Like Harris, he also was an exponent
of the theory that the Mississippi River was the danger
spot, and had warned Harris on May 22 that Union forces
at Cairo, Illinois, would advance on West Tennessee at
any time.

The result of this agreement between the Governor
and Pillow was an unbalanced defensive line in Tennessee
that was heavily slanted toward the western border. In
May and June, 1861, Harris concentrated 15,000 troops in
those forts on the Mississippi which were under construction:
Fort Harris, Fort Wright, Fort Pillow, and the Memphis
defenses. Less than 4,000 troops guarded the valuable
supply depot at Nashville and all of Middle Tennessee,
and only a small post was maintained at Knoxville in East
Tennessee. The Tennessee and Cumberland River defenses
suffered the most serious neglect. Although Harris in
May had inaugurated surveys for defensive positions on
both rivers, he did nothing to urge the completion of the
forts. For a brief period in June, Fort Donelson was manned by a company of forty unarmed men, and then was abandoned until October. Fort Henry was garrisoned in June by the Tenth Tennessee Infantry, but the fortifications remained unfinished when Johnston arrived in Tennessee, and half of the regiment which Harris sent to Fort Henry was unarmed. Failure to strengthen the inland river defenses while he had the authority to do so was probably Harris' most serious blunder as commander of the State Army.

The Governor's lack of interest in defenses for Nashville and the inland rivers was also due to another policy which he devised without consulting the Confederate authorities. While in command of the State Army, Harris became convinced that there was no real need for strong defenses on the northern border of Tennessee, either at Nashville or on the inland rivers. Under the policy of neutrality which Kentucky adopted in the spring of 1861, neither Federal nor Confederate troops were allowed even to pass through Kentucky, much less to occupy the State. The Governor of Kentucky, Beriah Magoffin, assured Harris that an agreement had been reached between Simon Buckner, commander of the Kentucky militia, and Federal General George McClellan. Supposedly, McClellan had promised that no Federal troops would march across Kentucky soil.
And Magoffin promised Harris that he would repel any such troop movements which might occur. On these slim assurances, Harris devised his policy of the "Legal Line." He believed that as long as Kentucky remained neutral, Tennessee's exposed northern border would need no defense. He wrote Pillow that he was satisfied that "the Federal government will not attempt to quarter troops in Kentucky," and warned Pillow to be extremely careful not to break Kentucky's neutrality by sending State troops into Kentucky. Yet this policy was definitely shortsighted, for there is no evidence that Harris ever considered what would happen to the defenseless Tennessee border if Kentucky's neutrality evaporated. And so it happened in September, 1861, when Leonidas Polk broke the neutral barrier and entered Kentucky. Then Harris' neat theory of the inviolable line went up in smoke, and Albert Sidney Johnston found that due to the Governor's strategy, no defenses existed on the Kentucky-Tennessee border in Middle and West Tennessee, save the incomplete works at Fort Henry and the abandoned position at Fort Donelson. 30

The overwhelming confidence which Harris placed in his theory of Kentucky as a buffer zone was demonstrated in a third policy which he devised in June, 1861. The combination of his fear of an invasion down the Mississippi and his trust in the safety of the Kentucky border induced
him to turn completely the defensive line in Tennessee so that it faced west, and to become interested in campaigning in Missouri. It was not that he did not expect a Federal advance. He simply expected that if an advance from Cairo was made on Tennessee, Kentucky would be bypassed and the Federals would move down the west bank of the Mississippi River before crossing into Tennessee. In June he wrote Pillow that he thought the Federals "may attempt to reach Memphis by crossing over to Bird's Point and pass down the river by land on the Missouri and Arkansas side." Once Harris had concentrated the State Army along the Mississippi River, he even contemplated the idea of abandoning Tennessee, weak as its defenses were, and of conducting a campaign into Missouri and Illinois. On June 20 he suggested such a campaign to Pillow, and on the following day wrote Pillow that "our line of offensive operations should be the west bank of the Mississippi River which means we will be able to reach Bird's Point without violating the neutrality of Kentucky." Harris' interest in Missouri not only demonstrates the absolute faith which he had in the safety of the Tennessee border, but again shows the lack of communication with the Confederate authorities. The Governor was in essence holding the State Army in trust until the Confederates took over. Weakened by a
lack of arms and composed of green regiments, the State Army was in no condition for an offensive, much less for putting up much of a defense. Not only did the Governor's attentions toward Missouri further delay building a defensive line in Tennessee, but also the seeds of the idea of a Missouri offensive were planted in the minds of Gideon Pillow and later, General Leonidas Polk. The continuation of such aspirations could only lead to a further delay in preparing a defensive line in Tennessee.\(^{31}\)

The fourth policy which Harris devised, his plan for the treatment of Unionist activity in East Tennessee, would also create problems for Johnston. During the fall of 1861, East Tennessee Unionists rose in rebellion against Confederate authority and forced Johnston to divert troops from the Kentucky line to protect the railroad link to Virginia. The seeds of this flare-up can be found in the two completely inconsistent policies which Harris maintained toward the Unionists in the summer of 1861, one before, the other after, his re-election as governor in August.

From April until August, Harris maintained a "soft" attitude toward Unionist activity in the region. The reason was that he wanted East Tennessee votes in the August election. In 1859 Harris had won re-election by
a slim majority over John Netherland, an East Tennessean. When the vote on secession was taken in June, 1861, thirty-four East Tennessee counties rejected the separation plan by a vote of more than two to one. Both of these facts looked ominous to Harris, for in the summer of 1861, a powerful East Tennessee party led by Netherland, T. A. R. Nelson, and William Brownlow picked a candidate, William Polk, and campaigned hard against Harris in East Tennessee. The party stressed the Governor's leadership in the secession move. Harris not only feared losing the governorship but also feared Polk's election might bring about Tennessee's readmission to the Union.

Harris had already inaugurated one move to insure his re-election, but evidently did not think it would be sufficient. The State Legislature resolved that furloughs be granted to all soldiers who wished to come home to vote, for many of the secessionists were in the army. Also, William Bate urged Leroy Walker to let Harris recall the Tennessee regiments in Virginia so they could vote.

Harris believed, however, that he must win the friendship of East Tennessee if he were to be re-elected. A close friend of Harris', H. S. Bradford, warned that "I am afraid Polk will pander to defection in East Tenn...." The policy which Bradford urged on Harris to adopt was the one that Harris had already adopted for himself.
Referring to East Tennessee, Bradford suggested that "we have nothing to gain by being precipital just now but much to gain by being cool and determined..." Harris had already determined to play down in East Tennessee the State's cooperation with and admission to the Confederacy. In May, Harris stationed in East Tennessee only fifteen companies of State troops and declined Walker's suggestion that Confederate troops be stationed in that area of the state. Harris explained that such a step would not be "advisable" and that "sound policy" required that State troops garrison East Tennessee. Harris also pursued a lenient policy in the treatment of Tories in that region. On June 30, he warned Pillow that there was an "overwhelming majority in most of the counties of that section" for a Unionist policy. Harris maintained that "forbearance and conciliation is the true policy to be pursued towards them..." A citizens' group at Cleveland, Tennessee, asked Harris to send a force there to quell Tory activities, but the Governor refused, stating that he doubted "...the propriety of sending troops to East Tennessee unless absolutely necessary."

Up until the election, Harris gave the Unionists a free rein on their activities. "Parson" Brownlow's Unionist newspaper circulated freely. Thomas A. R. Nelson stumped the region, speaking against both Harris and
secession. Andrew Johnson went from Cumberland Gap to Chattanooga attempting to whip up the East Tennesseans to rise in conjunction with an invasion from Kentucky. A perceptive onlooker, Colonel John C. Vaughan, on furlough in East Tennessee during July, saw the danger in Harris' "soft" policy. He warned the Governor of the dangers of his policy, complained that the East Tennessee commander, W. R. Caswell, was too lenient with the Unionists, and affirmed "there is only one way to treat those men."33

After the election on August 8, a remarkable change came in Harris' attitude toward the treatment of the Unionists. Re-elected by a majority of 20,000 votes, he nonetheless lost East Tennessee by almost 12,000 votes, and eight days after the election, announced a new and vigorous policy of repressing Loyalists. The new policy, which he described to Leroy Walker as "decided and energetic...," was a complete reversal of the old. In fact, Harris had repudiated the use of all forceful measures before the election. Harris now stated that "more troops should be stationed in that division of the State." He spoke of bringing in 14,000 troops to crush Unionist activity and of establishing recruiting camps in East Tennessee. He ordered the new East Tennessee commander, Zollicoffer, to arrest Unionist leaders and
banish them from the State if necessary. The new policy began even on the night of the election, when the popular Thomas A. R. Nelson was arrested. Two days later, a prominent Knoxville Whig, John Baxter, was seized. On August 26, Harris began his first major purge of Loyalists when he ordered a regiment into Johnson County. The commander carried a list of names of prominent Loyalists whom he was to arrest or kill if necessary.

East Tennessee Unionist elements never forgot the shock of the sudden change of policy. Throughout August and September, resentment smoldered, and then flared into open rebellion in October and November. The result was that Zollicoffer was forced to divert troops badly needed on part of his Kentucky line in order to put down the rebellion. Much of the Unionist activity probably could have been avoided if Harris had been consistent. In July, Landon Haynes warned Leroy Walker that only a policy which mixed leniency and force would keep Loyalist sentiment from rising in East Tennessee. Instead, Harris' first policy was all leniency and his post-election policy all force. The Governor's interest in political expediency and again his failure to work out a policy for East Tennessee with Confederate authorities had helped to prepare the way for Unionist activity against Johnston's Army.
4. Harris as District Commander

Harris bequeathed one final legacy to Johnston during the months of July and August, 1861. In July, Leonidas Polk arrived in Tennessee to assume command of the Second Department. But Polk's jurisdiction only extended to the west bank of the Tennessee River. The responsibility of the defense of Middle and East Tennessee fell to Isham Harris until Johnston arrived in September, when the Second Department was enlarged to include the Middle and East portions of the State. There was much to be done in Harris' command district during July and August. In Middle Tennessee, the inland river forts remained unfinished, and no defense line had been created to protect Nashville. In East Tennessee, no line had been established to block the mountain passes against invasion from Kentucky.

Harris failed completely to bolster defenses in Middle Tennessee. The problem lay in the awkward command arrangement whereby a State governor was commanding State and Confederate troops in an area supposedly under general Confederate jurisdiction. As late as September 14, Blanton Duncan complained to Leroy Walker that Harris was ineffective in Middle Tennessee because he did not consider himself "authorized to act or to command Confederate troops."
Indeed, during the two-month period while Middle Tennessee was Harris' jurisdiction, he made no attempt to construct any defenses either at Nashville or north of the city, and made no attempt to complete the work on the inland river defenses. Fort Donelson stood abandoned, and Fort Henry, its guns unmounted and its breastworks unfinished, continued to be manned by the poorly armed Tenth Tennessee Regiment. In June and July, Harris' neglect of the inland river forts and Nashville might have been explained, though not justified, by his belief in the barrier of Kentucky neutrality. In August, however, Harris decided that the neutrality of Kentucky was a sham, and it is to his discredit that he did nothing to bolster the defenses after he abandoned his trust in the "Legal Line."  

As early as July, a postal rider warned that Andy Johnson was collecting a force at Cincinnati to invade East Tennessee. In early August, Harris received information that the Federals had established Camp Dick Robinson, south of Lexington, Kentucky, for the purpose of training and arming Kentucky Union recruits. Harris also knew that Union sympathizers had established Camp Andy Johnson only forty miles north of Cumberland Gap. During August, this camp was a receiving station for hundreds of East Tennessee Tories who slipped through the mountain passes
at night. Harris first expressed doubt as to the future of Kentucky neutrality on August 4, when he told Zollicoffer only to respect neutrality as long as the Federals did and "not a moment longer." By August 30, the Governor was convinced that Federal troops were assembling at Camp Dick Robinson, Barboursville, and Williamsburg, and that day lashed out at fellow governor Magoffin for this "open violation of the neutrality of Kentucky." Yet his change of mind produced no change in Harris' actions toward Middle Tennessee defenses. The defenses remained incomplete when Harris transferred command of the region to Johnston in September. Ironically, the control of the region would then be assigned to Leonidas Polk, whose only interest was the defense of the Mississippi River. 37

Harris was equally ineffective in his efforts to manage affairs in East Tennessee. The tangled command system hampered constructive efforts. Technically, Felix Zollicoffer was commander in East Tennessee, for on August 1, he was assigned that command by the War Department. Yet while Zollicoffer held a brigadier's commission in the Confederate Army, his men were State troops which were not yet transferred to the Confederate Army. These troops were supposed to have been transferred in early August. On August 4, Harris wrote Zollicoffer that a
Confederate officer would soon be in East Tennessee for that purpose, "after which you will all pass from my command and be alone subject to the orders of the Confederate States." Yet the transfer was so slow that for all purposes Harris commanded in East Tennessee until Johnston came to Tennessee. As late as September 26, W. R. Caswell at Knoxville confessed to Harris that he did not even know whether his brigade was in State or Confederate service. The bulk of Zollicoffer's command was not transferred until mid-October.38

Because of this command confusion and Harris' consistent failure to communicate with the Confederates as to what defensive policy should be adopted, little work was done on East Tennessee defenses while Harris was territorial commander. It is true that during this period, the right flank of the defensive line in Tennessee was anchored at Cumberland Gap. Yet even this securing of the Cumberland Gap position was due to the initiative of Zollicoffer, not Harris. In late August, Zollicoffer received several reports of an impending invasion on East Tennessee through the unguarded Gap. Acting on his own initiative, Zollicoffer seized and fortified the Gap during the first week of September. By this move, Zollicoffer prevented the weak right flank in East Tennessee from crumbling even before Johnston arrived in Tennessee.39
In his four key positions of influence in the spring and summer of 1861, Harris shaped a host of problems which would plague the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Harris' lack of military experience, his eye for the political advantage, his haste in taking his state out of the Union, his absolute trust in his own strategy, and his failure to establish rapport with the Confederate Government—all combined to make the Governor's efforts far less successful than they could have been. To Leonidas Polk, and later to Johnston, Harris bequeathed a weak army, a nonexistent defensive line at Nashville and on the inland rivers, an unbalanced interest in the Mississippi River defenses, and a defensive line in West Tennessee which faced west instead of north. True, several positive steps were taken while Harris directed affairs in Tennessee. A superb logistical organization of the State Army was constructed, a regimental elan fostered, and Cumberland Gap was secured. Yet each of these positive steps was not due to Harris' efforts. The logistical organization was the product of the fine work of officers such as Moses Wright of the Ordnance Bureau. The regimental elan developed independently. The securing of Cumberland Gap was due to the work of Zollicoffer. In general, that part of the metal of the Army of Tennessee molded by Isham Harris was extremely weak.
Notes

1. "Reminiscences," Ms. in S. R. Simpson Papers, Confederate Collection, Tennessee State Archives; Harris to Jeff. Davis, July 2, 1861, I. G. Harris, Tenn. Gideon Pillow said that "Tennessee is the only State which has had a complete organization--an army corps--in the field....Tennessee's army is large, its arms complete--its equipment furnished, its organization a unit." Pillow to Harris, July 14, 1861, ibid.


8. J. W. Robertson to Harris, June 17, 1861, Col. Ed Pickett to Harris, Aug. 1, 1861, S. R. Anderson to Harris, June 29, 1861, Walker to Harris, May 20, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.

9. Harris to Pillow, Harris to Walker, May 25, 1861, ibid.

11. James C. Malone to Harris, April 29, 1861, in James C. Malone Letters, Confederate Collection, Tennessee Archives. Malone was an Ordnance Sergeant in the elite Rock City Guards of Nashville who went over their heads in purchasing repeating rifles and asked the State for financial assistance; Senate, Extra Session, 91-2; House, Extra Session, 16, 214; Senate, Second Extra Session, 14-5; House, Second Extra Session, 17-8, 37, 47; An example of the catering to key figures and sections was the State Senate's resolution to allow Taz Newman, Speaker of the Senate, to organize a regiment for Confederate service and purchase 800 of the best rifles he could find at any price and at State expense, Senate, Second Extra Session, 33, 43.

12. Senate, Second Extra Session, 100; House, Second Extra Session, 157, 173; "Joint Resolution to Transfer Volunteer Forces to the Confederate States," June 29, 1861, Miscellaneous File, Confederate Collection, Tennessee State Archives; Harris to Pillow, June 30, 1861, Harris to Jefferson Davis, July 2, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.


24. Porter, Tennessee, 321; Ridley, Battles and Sketches, 473-4; Haynes to Pillow, June 11, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.
25. Report of Medical Board of Tennessee to Isham Harris, October, 1861, in NA, Militia Laws; Journal, Tennessee Medical Board, Medical Board Papers, Tennessee State Archives.


30. Harris to Pillow, June 12, 13, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.; E. Merton Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky (Chapel Hill, 1926), 98-9. Coulter believes that McClellan for all purposes duped Magoffin into making an agreement with Harris to preserve neutrality on the Southern border of Kentucky.

31. Harris to Pillow, June 13, 20, 21, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.

32. Campbell, Attitude of Tennesseans toward the Union, 210-11, 276-7; OR, I, Vol. 52, pt. 2, pp. 79, 81; H. S. Bradford to Harris, July 12, 17, 1861, Harris to Walker, May 25, 1861, Harris to Pillow, June 30, 1861, Harris to G. W. Rowles et. al., July 4, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.

33. John C. Vaughan to Harris, July 12, 14, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.
34. Harris to Walker, Aug. 16, 1861, Harris to Zollicoffer, Aug. 16, 1861, ibid.

35. OR, I, Vol. 4, pp. 364-5, 393; Oliver Temple, East Tennessee and the Civil War (Cincinnati, 1899), 367.


37. H. A. Monsis to Harris, July 1, 1861, Harris to Zollicoffer, Aug. 4, 1861, Harris to Magoffin, Aug. 4, Aug. 30, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.; Arndt Stickles, Simon Bolivar Buckner, Borderland Knight (Chapel Hill, 1940), 85-87; Robert Kincaid, Wilderness Road (Harrrogate, Tenn., 1955), 228; OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 397.


39. Harris to Zollicoffer, Aug. 4, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.; OR, I, Vol. 4, pp. 194-5, 404; Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 13; James Rains to wife, Sept. 15, 1861, in Rains Papers, Tenn.; Hume Fogg, Zollicoffer's aide, wrote the General on September 1 that he was convinced the Legislature planned to depose Magoffin and "...do that which will give them power in Kentucky." Sept. 1, 1861, I. G. Harris, ibid.
"UNDER OUR OWN VINE AND OUR OWN FIG TREE"
THE LEGACY OF GIDEON PILLOW AND LEONIDAS POLK

On July 12, 1861, Leonidas Polk, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana, began a career of service with the Army of Tennessee which would last until he fell in the Atlanta campaign of 1864. Polk's first assignment was to command the Second Department until Albert Sidney Johnston arrived from California to assume permanent command of the department. Although the Bishop only held the temporary command for two months, he managed to create three serious problems which would plague Johnston in the fall of 1861 and the Army of Tennessee for the entire war. During July and August, 1861, the seeds of bitter personality and command conflicts were planted in the Army of Tennessee. The feud which began in July between Polk and his sub-commander, Gideon Pillow, was to rage throughout the autumn of 1861. And Polk began to assume a sullen aloofness which would hamper cooperation between Johnston and the Bishop in the fall and winter of 1861-1862. The second legacy to Johnston was that Polk became so preoccupied with Missouri operations and Mississippi River defense that he failed to build a defensive line in West Tennessee and did not use his influence with the Governor to see that defenses were built in Middle and East Tennessee. Finally, Polk, although -120-
well aware that Tennessee was devoid of a defensive line, broke the Kentucky neutrality barrier by seizing Columbus, Kentucky. This action, which occurred only a week before Johnston took command, deprived the unguarded Tennessee border of the slim but important protection neutrality had provided. The action also left Johnston an exterior line of communications and defense in Tennessee.

During his temporary command, Polk exhibited personality traits which would later prove injurious to the Army. To the casual observer, Polk was a distinguished soldier with the manners of a grand seignior who was idolized by his troops. True, Polk did present a striking appearance, and he was extremely popular with his troops. Yet there was another side to Polk's character that was dimly visible in the summer of 1861, only to emerge in full view when Johnston took command. On the one hand, Polk was the humble, sacrificing Bishop who buckled the sword over his clerical robes out of a sense of duty to his fellow Southerners. And he was also a man of little military experience who could be stubborn, aloof, insubordinate, quarrelsome and childish. As a Bishop, Polk had been trained to lead, but as a soldier, he never learned to follow. Beginning with Johnston in the fall of 1861, Polk would treat his superior officers
in a manner that smacked of insubordination. Until his death in 1864, the Bishop often chose to obey his commander only when it pleased Polk to do so. Yet throughout his career in the Army of Tennessee, Polk had a remarkable ability to evade the blame for situations that were the fault of these flaws in his character. He knew how to manipulate Albert Sidney Johnston, who was easily dominated by his old West Point roommate. Polk knew how to play on the sympathies of another old classmate, Jefferson Davis, and to use his own popularity in the Army to combat Braxton Bragg's constant accusations that Polk was insubordinate, accusations that were probably true. With such a personality and with amazing abilities to escape responsibility, Polk in 1861 was the most dangerous man in the Army of Tennessee.  

With such a personality, Polk was bound to clash with his sub-commander, Gideon Pillow. Pillow, who had been head of the State army while it was controlled by Harris, was retained by Polk as second-in-command of the Army of Tennessee because of Pillow's familiarity with the Army. In the summer of 1861, Pillow also exhibited traits of character which later would cause Johnston serious trouble, especially when Pillow was second-in-command of Fort Donelson in February, 1862. Pillow's trouble was that he found it difficult to be second in command to anyone, for he was vain, ambitious and easily offended. Pillow had
been raised in the snobbish, plantation clique of Columbia, Tennessee, which was the showplace of ante-bellum Tennessee society. Although he lacked military experience, Pillow received a brigadier general's commission from his old law partner James K. Polk when the Mexican War began. Pillow's war service was far from spectacular. He was extremely unpopular with his fellow officers, and his commander, Winfield Scott, accused him of insubordination. This war experience was significant, however, for it convinced Pillow that he was a military genius. His promotion to command the State Army in the spring of 1861 only entrenched him further in this belief.

In the summer of 1861, Pillow's ego suffered a sudden letdown that was to foment trouble in the Army in ensuing months. In his transfer to Confederate service, Pillow's rank was reduced from major general to brigadier general. Insulted, he never let the incident be forgotten. During the fall and winter of 1861-1862, he would spend most of his time trying to prove that this reduction in rank was unjust, and his efforts were to damage Johnston's defensive plans in Tennessee. Part of the damage was done even before Johnston took command. Pillow's injured vanity brought out two other facets of his character that were destined to harm the army. He developed a persecution complex, and was convinced during the summer that Polk and the other
officers in the Army were always against him. Consequently, he quarreled with Polk, B. F. Cheatham, John Sneed, and practically everyone else in the army. One observer remarked of Pillow that "I never did see a man with so few admirers in my life & so many enemies."

Also, Pillow's hurt pride generated an intense ambition to "redeem" his honor by conducting some glorious offensive campaign into Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky. These traits in his character--vanity, a quarrelsome nature, and ambition--were to be part of the cause of all three of the problems that Polk's temporary command produced for Johnston.2

The Polk-Pillow feud which broke out in the Army in July, 1861, not only diverted Polk from building defenses in Tennessee, but left a bad taste among the Army's high command that carried over into Johnston's command. The causes of the feud were the two officers' inability to work together, and the failure of Polk's Missouri campaign to develop. During July and August, the stubborn Polk and the ambitious Pillow clashed repeatedly. Sam. Tate reported that "Polk and Pillow are at loggerheads...," and John F. Henry reported that Polk and Pillow "are pulling in opposite directions." The feud centered on a proposed offensive into Missouri in July. Influenced by Isham Harris' desires for such a move, Pillow had longed to
campaign in Missouri in June. Before he could get under way, he was relieved of the command of the Army by Polk, who soon became interested in the idea of a Missouri offensive. A few days after Polk assumed command at Memphis on July 13, the Confederate Governor of Missouri, Claiborne Jackson, arrived at Polk's headquarters determined to talk the Bishop into a trans-Mississippi campaign. In mid-June, the Union bloc had seized control of St. Louis, routed a disorganized Confederate force at Boonville, and chased Jackson out of the State. Anxious to return, Jackson gave Polk a misleading report of the Confederate strength on the Arkansas border that could join with Polk in a drive on Missouri. Jackson assured the Bishop that Sterling Price and Ben McCulloch had 25,000 troops on the Missouri border that were waiting to help, while William Hardee had 7,000 well-equipped troops in northeast Arkansas that could also be used. Dazzled by the possibilities, Polk and Pillow formulated a bold invasion scheme to cross the Mississippi at New Madrid with 6,000 troops, join the forces of Price and Hardee, and march on St. Louis. Jackson, who saw he was winning his point, promised 10,000 additional troops in Missouri for good measure. ³

The planned invasion never got started. The failure of the enterprise was indicative of Polk's lack of military experience. Pillow's force was in no condition for an
offensive. Instead of having 6,000 effectives, Pillow could muster only 3,500 troops, because of sickness in the ranks. Polk had also trusted Jackson's word too much. After Jackson left Memphis, Polk received news that Price and McCulloch had only half as many men as Jackson had reported them to have, and that Hardee had only 2,300 poorly equipped troops instead of 7,000 well-armed men. Polk also had given little consideration to the command problems that such an expedition would have presented. He had no jurisdiction in Missouri, and none in Arkansas except in the counties bordering on the Mississippi. And Hardee's force, although within Polk's territorial jurisdiction, received its orders directly from the Secretary of War. Moreover, Polk had made no provisions for reinforcements and supplies to sustain an offensive, and had not even formulated a plan for what he would do once the army reached St. Louis.

Equally serious, the plan's failure gave the spark to Polk's and Pillow's mutual dislike which now flared into an open dispute. When Polk abandoned the idea and ordered Pillow to halt at New Madrid, Pillow protested bitterly. In late July, Pillow went ahead with preparations as if Polk had not suspended the move. Pillow styled himself "Commander of the Army of Liberation" and hinted that if Polk were a capable commander, he ought to be able to find
enough troops to make the move. Polk retorted that he
knew his business as department commander better than
Pillow did. The dispute continued throughout August, and
the two generals did little except debate whether Pillow
were going to campaign in Missouri. By the end of August,
relations between the two generals had completely broken
down. Pillow flatly informed Polk that he wished he had
never been assigned to Polk's command. Polk heartily agreed.
Almost two months had been wasted in quarreling, and
practically all that Polk had to show for his service as
commander so far was low morale among the high command.
As yet, there was still no defensive line in Tennessee. 5

In fact, Polk never established a line in Tennessee,
and thus left another problem for Johnston to solve. The
reason for Polk's failure was that he simply was not in-
terested in building a Tennessee line. Instead, he was
interested in the defense of the Mississippi Valley and
specifically, the strengthening of river forts on the
Mississippi River. In fact, a concern for the river's
defense was the prime factor in Polk's being appointed
department commander. Polk had first come to Davis' atten-
tion as a possible choice for temporary commander when Polk
wrote Davis to express his concern over the defenseless
condition of the Mississippi Valley. When Davis offered him
the post, Polk at first refused until Davis shaped the
command so that it would include the territory in which Polk was interested. Under Polk, the department included the river parishes in Louisiana north of Red River, the counties in Mississippi and Arkansas that bordered on the Mississippi River, and West Tennessee. Again, no small influence on Polk's decision to accept the post was the entreaties of groups of prominent Mississippi Valley citizens who pressed the Bishop to take the position. 6

All of Polk's interest in the Mississippi was not a sentimental whim. What was at stake was a philosophy of how the Western Confederacy should be defended. Polk was the first of several generals to be associated with the Army of Tennessee who were "River Generals," such as P. G. T. Beauregard. To them, the defense of the Mississippi Valley and specifically, of the Mississippi River, was more important than the defense of the Central Heartland. In the fall of 1861, much of the failure of Johnston and Polk to coordinate efforts on the Tennessee line was due to a difference in opinion as to what was most important to defend. To Polk, it was the Mississippi Valley. To Johnston, at least until Beauregard came to Tennessee in early 1862, it was the Heartland.

Polk's defensive policy was demonstrated by the dispositions he made for Tennessee's defense. The vulnerable area of his department was the 100-mile wide stretch of
flat country between the Mississippi and the Tennessee Rivers. Polk made no effort whatsoever to concentrate troops or build defensive works in this area in order to protect against Union forces reportedly assembling at Cairo, Illinois. Nor did Polk urge Isham Harris to press forward the work on the inland river forts that were not yet under Polk's jurisdiction. As events of the fall and winter would demonstrate, Polk cared even less for the inland river forts than he did for the land area of West Tennessee. Instead, Polk continued Harris' policy of massing the Tennessee forces in the river forts. By mid-August, batteries commanded the Mississippi River at Memphis and at Fort Harris, six miles above the city. Sixty-five miles north of Memphis, the powerful battery at Fort Wright swept the river. A few miles further north, at the First Chickasaw Bluff, another battery was posted at Fort Pillow. The northernmost fort in Polk's chain was the strong work at Island Number Ten, located at the foot of a horseshoe bend in the Mississippi, opposite New Madrid.  

There were two obvious faults in Polk's policy. There were too many forts on the Mississippi that were of moderate strength, and yet not one that could be termed a principal salient. Also, no matter how strong the river batteries were, unless Polk established a line in West Tennessee, the river forts were vulnerable to being taken in flank by a
land assault. Polk grasped the necessity for more concentration of firepower at a single fort, but did not see the need of establishing land defenses in West Tennessee. Two officers urged Polk that land defenses were necessary. Asa Gray, Polk's topographical engineer, argued that Polk should establish a line stretching from Union City to Island Number Ten, with a cordon of outposts in between. Gray contended that such a line would both provide a principal salient on the river and protect northwestern Tennessee, especially the vital rail junction at Union City. Colonel John McCown, commanding one of Polk's brigades, agreed and urged Polk that such a line was the strongest possible in West Tennessee. Polk, however, rejected the possibility of an inland land concentration, and sought only a river salient to concentrate firepower. There was no doubt that Island Number Ten was the strongest position available in Tennessee. The island commanded the channel of the Mississippi in three directions. The eastern flank of the fort was protected by the cypress-entangled, deep waters of Reelfoot Lake and by the Reelfoot and Obion Rivers.

Not only did Polk ignore Gray's and McCown's arguments for a West Tennessee line, but he also rejected their argument to place the main river salient at Island Number Ten. Instead, Polk had his eye on Columbus, Kentucky, located
thirty miles north of the Tennessee border on the Mississippi, at the railhead of the Memphis and Ohio line. The decision to seize Columbus and violate the neutrality of Kentucky was a combination of two factors, Pillow's ambition and Polk's stubbornness. While in command of the State Army, and before he had become interested in a Missouri offensive, Pillow had considered an expedition into Kentucky to seize the railhead at Columbus. In fact, he had even written Governor Magoffin for permission to enter the State. Rebuffed by the Governor, Pillow had turned his eyes toward Missouri. Now that Polk had dampened his aspirations in Missouri, Pillow again saw the opportunity to lead an offensive into Kentucky.

During the last week in August, Pillow began to pressure the Bishop to allow him to seize the town. Pillow contended that Kentucky was a boiling caldron of Unionist sentiment and that Federal troops were ready to sweep downriver and seize Columbus. Let him have three boats, Pillow argued, and he would save the town. Pillow was actually more interested in saving Pillow's reputation. Just a few days earlier, he had argued that the river defenses in Tennessee were strong enough to allow him to abandon them and move into Missouri. When Polk stymied that aspiration, Pillow suddenly became alarmed at the condition of the river forts. On August 28, he informed
Polk that he had "modified" his view of the forts and had decided they could not withstand attack. The only salvation was to allow him to seize Columbus, "the only position left us...." 9

While this argument helped win Polk over, a weakness in Polk's character also influenced the decision. Polk had a habit of gathering a few facts on a situation, closing his mind to any alternative, and then dogmatically holding to his first idea. The decision to move on Columbus was an example of this weakness. Throughout August, Polk had caught brief snatches of information, though nothing concrete, which indicated the Federals were preparing to enter Kentucky. Information reached him of recruiting activities in Indiana and Ohio, and of a foray by a small Union party to disperse a pro-Confederate group at Ellicott's Mills, Kentucky. Finally, on September 2, he received news that a Union column had occupied Belmont, Missouri, opposite Columbus. Immediately Polk made a hasty decision and held to it. He ordered Pillow to seize Columbus. The sound arguments of Gray and McCown for Island Number Ten were ignored. In fact, there is no evidence that Polk ever considered whether Columbus was so valuable a position that it was worth damaging Confederate relations with Kentucky. Polk did not even inform the War Department that he was going to make the move. He did
ask Magoffin on September 1 to inform him as to what he knew about recent Federal activity, but Polk did not wait for Magoffin's reply. A combination of ambition, lack of communication, and sheer dogmatism prompted the all-important move that officially ended Confederate respect of Kentucky's neutrality. 10

Polk had made what was probably one of the greatest blunders of the War, and in so doing, had created another problem to Johnston. The occupation of Columbus was actually a combination of several blunders. There was a complete lack of communication between Polk, Harris, and Richmond authorities on the matter of Kentucky neutrality. Harris knew nothing of Polk's plan. On August 30, Harris assured Magoffin that troops in Tennessee would continue to respect Kentucky's neutrality. Three days later, these troops were moving into Kentucky. Richmond authorities knew no more than Harris. After the move had been made, Polk sent a letter of explanation and Harris sent a telegram of protest to Jefferson Davis. Affairs in Richmond were so confused that on September 4 the Secretary of War, Leroy Walker, ordered Polk to withdraw to Tennessee, and Jefferson Davis told Polk that he approved the move into Kentucky. Polk himself did not seem to be sure of what he was doing. On September 4, he stubbornly maintained he was going to hold Columbus at all costs. Four days later, he informed
Magoffin that if the Federals withdrew from Paducah, which had been seized the day after the occupation of Columbus, Polk would withdraw. This confusion of orders and counter orders, indicative of an absence of policy on neutrality, gave political ammunition to the pro-Union element in Kentucky. On September 18, after using the incident for all the propaganda it was worth, the Union bloc managed to carry through in the legislature a formal abandonment of neutrality and a declaration of support for the Union.  

Polk's action also foiled the attempts of pro-Confederate Kentuckians to maintain the State as a neutral buffer zone to aid the Confederacy. Although the correspondence between these Kentuckians and the Confederates was vague on the subject, it appears that a group headed by men such as Simon Buckner, Blanton Duncan, and John Helm believed Kentucky as a neutral zone was worth 50,000 troops to the Confederates. These men felt that two groups, the pro-Confederates and the strict neutralists, could be combined to keep the Federals out of the State. The group's philosophy was expressed by Buckner in his reaction to Polk's move. He urged Polk to withdraw, and argued that if Polk remained, the neutral elements would be aroused against the Confederates as invaders. If Polk withdrew, the same neutral elements would force the Union troops to withdraw
from Paducah, which had been occupied two days after Columbus was seized.

Buckner realized something that the Confederates would grasp only after a year of unsuccessful cajoling and Bragg's Kentucky campaign. Kentucky people were Kentuckians first, and Unionists or Confederates second. These people resented any meddling in their affairs from the outside, from friends as well as enemies. For example, in 1862 the same Kentucky legislature that condemned Bragg's invasion also condemned the issuance of Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Both acts were considered as interference from the outside. This desire for isolation was the result of several individualistic factors that comprised the "Kentucky mind." Since the Revolutionary War, Kentuckians had nurtured a border state complex that produced an abnormal fear of being invaded. Also, the State was a geographical bottleneck between North and South. Pulled by economic and family ties toward both sides, many Kentuckians resisted Union and Confederate invasion. Since Polk invaded first, a combination of this neutral sentiment and Unionist propaganda depicted the Confederates as the aggressor. Any hopes for a neutral buffer zone, as envisioned by Buckner, were thus destroyed.

The occupation of Columbus as a defensive position was also a blunder. Historians have praised the seizure
of the town as a brilliant piece of strategy that netted the Confederates a strong river bastion. Actually, Columbus was not a strong position. In fact, it was a trap. Holding Columbus provided no additional security against a Union advance. The stronger natural defenses at Island Number Ten were better able to repel a move down the river. Holding Columbus could not prevent an invasion of Tennessee via the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. If Polk had seized Paducah instead of Columbus, he would have sealed off these invasion routes and blocked the Ohio River as well. Buckner later pointed out that any strategic advantage Polk acquired in occupying Columbus was neutralized when the Federals seized Paducah two days later. Also, the occupation of Columbus could not prevent a land advance down the New Orleans and Ohio Railroad into West Tennessee. Indeed, Columbus could easily be flanked and completely encircled by such a move. Polk could have stifled this danger of a flanking operation if he had extended a line from Columbus east to Mayfield, but he never attempted to do so. Not only was Columbus a weak position, but its occupation placed the West Tennessee defenses on an exterior line. Since the town was thirty miles in advance of the recruiting center Polk had established at Union City, the Confederate line must face east as well as north. Clearly, the whole operation was small compensation for the defensive problems it posed.¹³
Leonidas Polk left few achievements as evidence of his summer's work, but did leave Johnston many problems. The inland rivers had been ignored and no line had been established in West Tennessee. The move into Kentucky had put Johnston on an exterior line and had violated the neutral line at a time when defenses in Tennessee behind that buffer zone were almost non-existent. Perhaps a more serious problem was that Pillow and Polk initiated a personality conflict between themselves and with Johnston, a conflict that would severely hamper the army's effectiveness. When they were not fighting each other, Polk and Pillow would maintain a disinterested attitude toward Johnston's problems in Middle and East Tennessee. The ambitious Pillow and the stubborn Polk had only one interest, and that was the Mississippi River defense. They would oppose and refuse cooperation with Johnston, and would remain aloof at Columbus as the Tennessee line threatened to crumble around them. Perhaps the Bishop was also a prophet. In July he had made a statement that would summarize his future attitude toward Johnston. Polk had said, "...all we desire is to be left alone, to repose in quietness under our own vine and our own fig tree."
1. Colonel Fremantle wrote that Polk "is a good-looking, gentlemanlike man with all the manners and affability of a 'grand seignor.' He is fifty-seven years of age--tall, spright, and looks much more the soldier than the clergyman." Walter Lord (ed.), Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, On His Three Months in the Southern States (Boston, 1954), 111; Moxley Sorrel wrote that Polk had won "to himself the abiding affection and confidence of all officers and men whom he commanded." G. Moxley Sorrel, Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer, edited by Bell Wiley (Jackson, Tenn., 1955), 185; Sam Watkins, "Co Aytch" Maury Gray's, First Tennessee Regiment or a Side Show of the Big Show, edited by Bell Wiley (Jackson, Tenn., 1952), 34.

2. Pillow to Harris, June 23, July 14, 1861, Polk to Leroy Walker, July 20, 1861, in Gideon Pillow Papers, Duke University Library; John Henry to Gustavus Henry, Aug. 31, 1861, in Henry Papers, UNC; J. S. Bradford to Harris, July 17, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn. Bradford wrote on July 12 that Pillow's command "has had a dampening influence on the country...." Bradford to Harris, July 12, 1861, ibid.


5. OR, I, Vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 115, Vol. 3, pp. 693-94; Polk was often involved in quarrels. Bragg complained that Polk's troops at Shiloh were poorly disciplined and that "the good Bishop sets the example by taking whatever he wishes...." Bragg to wife, March 28, 1862. On September 27, 1863, after the battle of Chickamauga, Bragg wrote his wife that Polk had again disobeyed orders and that Bragg resolved to bring the matter to an issue "this time." William Bixby Collection of Braxton Bragg Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis; Jeff Thompson suggested that Polk "belongs to the ox telegraph line." OR, I, Vol. 3, p. 659.

6. William Polk, Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General

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(2 vols., New York, 1915), I, 352-8, 369-79. To a young clergyman, Polk wrote "I took the office only to fill a gap—only because the President, as he said, could find no one to whom he could with satisfaction devolve its duties." ibid., 369; Horn, Army of Tennessee, 49; Polk to Davis, Nov. 6, 1861, Leonidas Polk Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC; Capers, Memphis, 144.

7. Harris to Pillow, June 21, 1861, Pillow to Harris, May 3, 1861, Milton Haynes to Pillow, June 11, 1861, I. G. Harris, Tenn.; OR, I, Vol. 4, pp. 363-4; Capers, Memphis, 143-4.


10. On August 28, when Fremont assigned Grant to command, he told him "It is intended, in connection with all these movements, to occupy Columbus, Ky., as soon as possible." OR, I, Vol. 3, p. 142; accounts of the activities of both belligerents in Kentucky are found in Stickles, Buckner, 55-89, Coulter, Civil War and Readjustment, 100-110, and in N. A. Shaler, Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth (Boston, 1885), 250-51. Shaler, though a pro-Union member of the Kentucky legislature in 1861, gives a fair account. The famed "Kentucky Brigade" or "Orphan Brigade" was organized at Camp Boone in Montgomery County, Tennessee, a few miles from the Kentucky border. See Ed. Porter Thompson, History of the First Kentucky Brigade (Cincinnati, 1868), 52; see also "The Civil War Reminiscences of John Johnston, 1861-1865," typed copy of Ms. in Tennessee State Archives; S. R. Latta to "Mary," Sept. 7, 1861, Samuel Rankin Latta Papers, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane.

11. Harris to Magoffin, Aug. 30, 1861, I. G. Harris, Tenn.; on Sept. 4, Harris wrote that "The Confederate troops that landed at Hickman last night, did so without my knowledge or consent, and I am satisfied, without the knowledge or consent of the President." Harris to Magoffin, Sept. 4, 1861, ibid. Harris told Polk that the move "is unfortunate as the President and myself are pledged to respect the
neutrality of Kentucky." Harris to Polk, Sept. 4, 1861, ibid.; Harris wrote Davis that the move was "unfortunate, calculated to injure our cause in the State." Harris to Davis, Sept. 4, 1861, ibid.; Polk told Davis that "I thought proper, under the plenary power delegated to me...," to seize the position. Polk to Davis, Sept. 4, 1861, Jefferson Davis Papers, Louisiana Historical Association Collection, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane (cited hereinafter as Davis, Louisiana, Tulane). Polk told Magoffin that "A military necessity...," required the town's occupation and admitted the President had not been in- formed of the move until after it had been made.

12. OR, I, Vol. 4, pp. 179-93, 400; Stickles, Buckner, 73. Buckner maintained that if Polk withdrew "...I can rally thousands of neutrality Union men to expel the Federals." OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 189; see also ibid., Vol. 52, pt. 2, pp. 94-5; William Preston Johnston, the General's son, seemed to have held the idea that Kentucky would be valuable as a buffer. In April, he wrote that Magoffin was satisfied that "any precipitate action on the part of our friends will react and damage us." see ibid., p. 72; In August, Johnston wrote his wife that "I think the great Southern gain in Ky., may keep the Union men quiet, and Lincoln afraid to molest the State." Johnston to "Rosa," Aug. 8, 1861, in Mrs. Mason Barret Collection of Albert Sidney and William Preston Johnston Papers, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane (cited hereinafter as Johnston, Barret, Tulane); a soldier in the Orphan Brigade wrote that "...since the neutrality of Kentucky has been busted asunder, things have taken quite a change.... A great many people throughout Kentucky believe we have come to wrong them, until we have shown them we are for their protection." W. E. Coleman to "Bert," Oct. 6, 1861, W. E. Coleman Letters, Confederate Collection, Tennessee State Archives.


14. Polk's Proclamation, July 13, 1861, Johnston, Barret, Tulane.
PART III
THE TEMPERING OF THE JOHNSTON INFLUENCE
AUTUMN, 1861
THE STAR OR THE COMET:

ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON COMES TO TENNESSEE

The tall Kentuckian was a welcome visitor in Richmond. The entire Confederacy, especially the Western Department, had been waiting for Albert Sidney Johnston to complete his long, overland journey from Los Angeles to Richmond. Leonidas Polk had gone to the President again to insure that Johnston would be the Bishop's successor. A delegation of prominent citizens from Memphis and North Mississippi, including Congressmen and railroad presidents, also made the journey to make certain that Davis would place Johnston in command of the Army in the West. When Johnston arrived in Richmond, he conferred with Davis, and then accepted the rank of major general and the command of Department Number Two. 1

This new command assignment marked the beginning of the last of many careers for Johnston. His most recent, as commander of the United States forces in the Pacific Department, had ended with Johnston's resignation and his flight from virtual captivity. After being closely watched in Los Angeles because of his known sympathies for the Confederacy, Johnston slipped away to begin his last career. The General traveled by horseback through 800 miles of desert country from Los Angeles to Mesilla, where he took the stage for an additional 700-mile trek to San Antonio. His trek had nothing romantic about it--
a dull trip over miles of arid Colorado desert, the monotony broken by swarms of flies and mosquitoes, pools of brackish water, and bands of hostile Navajo and Apache Indians.

One incident en route seemed prophetic to Johnston. While traveling by night across the desert country between Carrizo and Indian Wells, he was guided by the light of a huge comet. Johnston described the comet "...as a good omen, its tail stood to the South East which was our course." Little did he know that he also summarized the later opinion of many respecting his service in Tennessee. He wrote: "It seems to move with inconceivable velocity & is already fast disappearing."²

Albert Sidney Johnston came to the Army of Tennessee after years of disappointment in various interrupted careers of service. As a youth during the days of Stephen Decatur, he had longed to go to sea. His family discouraged young Johnston and instead sent him to study at Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky, not far from his birthplace at Washington. He later entered West Point and hoped to see active frontier service. In his first duty on the frontier, however, he spent most of his time at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. He mingled in society at St. Louis with Major William Preston, a veteran of Mad Anthony Wayne's campaigns, and married his
daughter, Henrietta. Shortly after the birth of their second child, his wife became ill and asked her husband to quit the army he loved to be near her. Johnston resigned from the army, but soon Henrietta Johnston died.

For a time, Johnston lived as a recluse on a farm near St. Louis and finally went to Texas to begin a new career in the service of the struggling Republic. He soon was commissioned brigadier general and commander of President David Burnet's army but this career was ended when Johnston was severely wounded in a duel. He returned to Kentucky but soon came back to begin another career in Texas as Secretary of War in the government of Mirabeau B. Lamar. Financial difficulties and illness cut his service short, and again he went back to Kentucky. After remarrying, he came back to Texas for a third time and became a planter. This third career in Texas was begun at his China Grove Plantation in Brazoria County. After struggling to overcome his financial difficulties, Johnston rejoined the United States Army and fought in the Mexican War. He returned with no fixed rank in the army, and so went back to China Grove.

When Jefferson Davis became Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce, Johnston was once more appointed to active service as Colonel of the Second Cavalry Regiment. In 1857 he led the expedition in Utah against
the Mormons. Johnston's service there was a failure. He saw no action against the Mormons, but struggled against mud, hard winters, and political animosity from Washington. Johnston asked to be relieved of his duty. When the chance for a new career in the Department of the Pacific became available, Johnston accepted the command of the Department. This career, too, was short and unpleasant. When Johnston learned that Texas had seceded from the Union, he sent his resignation to Washington via the next outgoing express and began the long trek to Richmond.

Johnston's life had been frustrated by grief, disappointment, and by innumerable careers in which he felt that he had not proved his worth. To Johnston, service in the Confederacy offered an opportunity to prove to himself that he could succeed at a chosen career. He indicated this in a letter to his wife, written while on the desert near Yuma, Arizona. He wrote, "Never before have I had so many probabilities of success & better grounds for the belief that my star will continue to be in the ascendant."³

From the time Johnston assumed command of the Second Department on September 15, until the end of December, his influence was to temper the metal of the Army of Tennessee forged in the summer of 1861. There would be other com-
pounding agents in the next four years. But in the autumn of 1861, the Johnston influence was the tempering agent. This influence was a complex of Johnston's personality, his strategy, and the timeliness of his appearance. His personality was the predominant element in this influence, and would affect both his strategy and the time factor. Elements in his personality acted upon and reacted to the vital strategic areas in his department--the Columbus sector, the inland river forts, Central Tennessee, and the Cumberland Mountain line. By January of 1862, when the Federal winter campaign began, the Johnston influence had tempered each of these strategic areas. Each was influenced--and weakened--by different facets of the Johnston personality. No two strategic points received the same personality emphasis. One area, the inland river forts, felt the influence of Johnston's weaknesses. This same area, where the tempering influence was the weakest, was to receive the brunt of the Federal advance in February, 1862.

Johnston's tempering influence had its roots in two major weaknesses in Johnston's personality. As far as human nature was concerned, Johnston lived in a world to himself. He did not understand nor could he judge people. He was never able to establish rapport with his sub-commanders, and never really knew their personalities or
command problems. Also, Johnston never felt the "pulse" of his command structure. He was insensible to command friction in the department, such as that between Polk and Pillow. He trusted lieutenants to accomplish difficult tasks when their backlog of conduct did not merit trust. For example, when good commanders were needed at the inland river defenses in February, 1862, Johnston would send officers who had the worst record of performance in the department. Also, Johnston's overly gentle nature and his childlike faith in human goodness made him an easy mark for an ambitious lieutenant. He was patient in dealing with officers such as Polk, whose actions were insubordinate, so patient that sometimes it appeared that Johnston's officers controlled the General instead of the reverse.

The second root of the weakness of the tempering influence was Johnston's narrow outlook. His entire life had been parceled into departments or careers which had little continuity. Johnston seemed able to grasp only one area of thought at a time, and found it difficult to grasp the total command picture of his department. In the fall of 1861, for example, Johnston became so intrigued with operations in the Bowling Green sector and with the menial details of operations there that he seemed to forget that he commanded a department.
The second element of Johnston's tempering influence were his ideas on strategy. When the Federals began their winter campaign in January of 1862, Johnston had prepared no grand strategy, and there was to be no coordinate effort between Polk, Hardee, and Zollicoffer as district commanders. In fact, Johnston never formulated a grand strategy for the Second Department. Part of this failure was due to weaknesses in his personality such as his tendency to look at a situation only on a limited scale and his difficulty in communicating with his subordinates.

Another reason Johnston failed to devise a strategy was that he must first build an army before he could develop a plan of action. In September, 1861, he had 27,000 troops along the Tennessee line, some of whom were not armed at all, and many of whom were improperly armed. Of these, 6,000 were scattered throughout East Tennessee, and 21,000 were dispersed throughout West Tennessee from Memphis to Columbus. Johnston was convinced by mid-November that the Federals had 50,000 troops in Central Kentucky to threaten Middle Tennessee, that from 20,000 to 25,000 troops were concentrated opposite Polk around Cairo, and between 10,000 and 20,000 were facing Zollicoffer in East Kentucky. Johnston's only reserve was William Hardee's paltry army of 3,600 effective in the Upper District
of Arkansas. There were no arms to equip those volunteers who were available.

Another factor which diverted Johnston from forming a departmental strategy was that his time was occupied in attempting to mask the real weakness of his army, especially the center corps. Throughout the autumn of 1861, Johnston conducted a series of thrusts and parries designed to befuddle his opponent in Central Kentucky, William Sherman who commanded the Department of the Cumberland. The ruse utilized cavalry raids, infantry marches, counter marches, and infantry skirmishes, all of which were designed to create the impression of a much larger force on the Bowling Green line. Johnston did not fully realize how successful his effort was. He did not know that Sherman thought Johnston had 30,000 men on the line when Johnston actually had only 12,000. Ironically, this success would prove to be part of Johnston's undoing, for he would become so intrigued with bluffing Sherman and his successor Don Carlos Buell in Central Kentucky, that he would fail to see the danger of Federal movements in other areas.

Though Johnston never developed a grand strategy for the Army, he did have several ideas which he hoped to utilize on the Kentucky-Tennessee line. He tried to put into effect a form of the defensive-offensive strategy.
He planned to remain on the defensive until he could both raise an army and stabilize his defensive line. Johnston hoped he could muster enough logistical strength to launch an offensive into Kentucky and strike the Federals before they could move into Tennessee. But in the fall of 1861, he was unable to accumulate sufficient war material and men to sustain an offensive. The offensive aspects of the strategy remained only the cavalry and infantry thrusts which Johnston made in order to confuse his enemy.

Other elements of Johnston's potential strategy were visible in the fall of 1861. Johnston felt the keen responsibility of defending the Heartland, and knew there was no second line of reserves or defense. When Johnston was in Richmond in early September, Jefferson Davis cautioned Joseph E. Johnston, and probably Albert Sidney as well, not to fight unless there were a reasonable assurance of victory. Even if Davis did not tell him, Johnston held to this policy. Also, he saw the need to protect his troop-recruiting and food-producing areas in Tennessee. This need forced him into a strategy of dispersion in order to defend these all-important areas. For example, the need to protect the fertile grain country north of Nashville was one reason the central position was moved from Nashville to Bowling Green, Kentucky.
It is probable that the hopes for European recognition or intervention made Johnston careful only to commit his troops where victory was certain, lest Confederate prestige be damaged. The possibilities of foreign intervention, especially during the Trent affair, created excitement in the Department. The news of the Trent affair created great delight at Johnston's headquarters, and in December, hopes were high in Tennessee that foreign powers would intervene.6

The timing of Johnston's arrival in Tennessee was a third element in his tempering influence. In September, 1861, Johnston assumed command at a peculiar time of hope, decision, and change. The hope was exhibited by the citizens of the Heartland and by the Central Government. Many were convinced that with Sidney Johnston in Tennessee, all would be well. Yet there was a foreboding air about the degree of confidence these people placed in Johnston's abilities. He had never held a command which entailed responsibilities similar to those of the Second Department. Yet everyone was absolutely confident that he could defend with ease the 400-mile wide Tennessee line with the paltry army on hand. Consequently, public officials and citizens in the Heartland, as well as authorities in Richmond, would be apathetic toward Johnston's pleas for support in the fall of 1861.
Early autumn was also a time of change. When Johnston arrived, the limits of the Second Department had just been extended to include Middle and East Tennessee. The command of the inland forts was being transferred from Harris to Leonidas Polk, whose command in West Tennessee was now enlarged to include the forts. Polk's Columbus operation had just laid bare Tennessee's defenseless border to a possible Federal invasion. This move, coupled with Zollicoffer's occupation of Cumberland Gap, left Middle Tennessee on a recessed, exterior line. The attitude toward East Tennessee Loyalists was in the process of revision, and already murmurs of discontent were coming from the mountain coves.

Johnston also found that he had to make vital decisions with little time for deliberation. The weakness of Tennessee's defenses and the large number of changes in progress demanded immediate action. He must decide where to establish the central line, who would command the central corps, and how he could build up the small army. More officers must be found for the expanding army, the department must be reorganized, and some plan of action must be devised. All of these decisions, as well as changes, fell upon Johnston's shoulders at the same time in September, 1861, when he arrived in Tennessee.
Notes

1. Leroy Walker to Johnston, August 31, 1861, Johnston to Walker, Sept. 11, 1861, Headquarters Book, Tulane; Resolution of Committee of Safety, Memphis to Jefferson Davis, Sept. 3, 1861, in Johnston, Barret, Tulane.

2. A. S. Johnston to wife, July 5, 1861, Johnston, Barret, Tulane.

3. William Preston Johnston, The Life of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston Embracing His Services in the Armies of the United States, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States (New York, 1879), 1-291; Mrs. Susan Preston Hepburn to William Johnston, April 27, 1861, A. S. Johnston to sister, June 1, 1861, Johnston to wife, July 1, 1861, in Johnston, Barret, Tulane.


5. Johnston, Johnston, 363-66; The military historian Liddell Hart, one of Sherman's biographers, records that "Buckner's force, the most threatening, although only five thousand strong, was magnified by rumour..." and that Sherman "was even doubtful of holding Kentucky...." and expected that Johnston would strike. Sherman argued to Secretary of War Simon Cameron that 60,000 men would be needed at once and that 200,000 would eventually be needed to oppose Johnston. Buell relieved Sherman of his command in November. See B. H. Liddell Hart, Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American (New York, 1958), 100, 102, 107, 109.

Fuller described the move as one "in which the first phase is attrition and the second counter-attack," ibid. Fuller stated that in the Civil War "tactical theory remained Napoleonic and...Jomini's Summary of the Art of War was to be found in many a knapsack." ibid., 103-104; as early as May, military leaders in Tennessee were hopeful of foreign intervention, Pillow to Harris, May 25, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tennessee; William P. Johnston wrote his wife that, "the war cannot last long....the necessities of commerce will compel England & France to interfere."

Aug. 8, 1861, in Johnston, Barret, Tulane; Gilmer wrote his wife that, "the news from England has encouraged us much—was hailed here with delight by all. Yankeedom will soon have their hands full and running over." Gilmer to wife, Dec. 20, 1861, Gilmer Papers, UNC; on December 29, Gilmer wrote that the news at Johnston's headquarters was that Napoleon told Winfield Scott would come between England and the Union if Mason and Slidell were not released, Dec. 29, 1861, ibid.; the Nashville telegraph operator dutifully kept Johnston informed on world news, and on Dec. 18, sent the message, "Latest British papers are bitter & hostile to Federals." NA, West. Dept. T.R., 1861.

THE BOWLING GREEN LINE

Camps Boone and Trousdale lay north of Nashville near the Kentucky line. Here the untrained volunteer regiments from Middle Tennessee and Kentucky were drilled and mustered into Confederate service during the late summer of 1861. Life for the recruits was pleasant in the rolling Tennessee bluegrass. Troops at Boone and Trousdale vied to see which camp could invent the largest number of amusements in order to escape the boredom of camp routine. Cooking, gymnastics, singing, and wrestling occupied the time as the regiments awaited action.

On September 16, both camps came alive with preparations for a movement which was kept secret from the troops. On the night of September 17, the Kentucky and Tennessee regiments decamped and boarded Louisville and Nashville Railroad cars. Throughout the night, trains rattled northward, and on the morning of September 18, all available armed men in the Middle Tennessee sector began arriving at Bowling Green, Kentucky, the new center of Johnston's line. Another visitor arrived on that same morning. He was Simon Bolivar Buckner, the new commander of Johnston's center line.¹

When Johnston arrived at Nashville from Richmond on September 14, his first decision, after he conferred with Isham Harris, was to fill the gap in the center by moving
the line seventy miles north to Bowling Green. During the next four months the defense of Bowling Green became an obsession with Johnston. He toiled over the routine details of army management at Bowling Green as if he commanded only that district, and not a department. By late December, this fascination with the central area worked two visible effects on him. He grew certain that the Federals would come from Central Kentucky via Bowling Green and Nashville, and convinced that the army of Don Carlos Buell was the main threat, even though two other Union armies threatened in Kentucky. A third effect of this concentration would become visible in late January. In his overconcern for one salient, Johnston was steadily losing command of the whole. The decline of the Johnston influence over the army began on the Bowling Green line.

Johnston became fascinated with the Bowling Green sector for several reasons. The move from Nashville to Bowling Green was the first offensive which Johnston undertook in his new command, and he hoped to go still further north before winter came. He was in a sense forced onto the line in an effort to protect Middle Tennessee. Once at Bowling Green, his attention was held by the need to bolster that weak position with a secondary line. Also, the first rumors of a Federal advance against Johnston
indicated Bowling Green was the target. Although the
advance proved to be a false alarm, Johnston became
involved in organizing the reinforcements sent during
the crisis. Moreover, the pattern of the forays intended
to bluff the Federal commanders as to the army's strength
originated from Bowling Green, as did Johnston's intel-
ligence network.

The presence of Simon Buckner in Nashville gave
Johnston the opportunity for his first offensive move.
Buckner had abandoned his hopes of a neutral buffer zone
after Polk refused to give up Columbus, and had come to
Nashville to offer his sword to the Confederacy. This
capable Buckner was a native of the Green River country
around Munfordville and knew the terrain. He was also
an excellent organizer. As Major General and Inspector
General of the Kentucky State Guard, he had transformed
the old "cornstalk militia" into a well-armed and well-
trained force of 12,000 men. Such ability to organize
would be needed at Bowling Green, for the force to be
assembled there was a disorganized combination of green
regiments from Camps Trousdale and Brown, unarmed troops
from Nashville, scattered commands such as B. F. Terry's
Texas Rangers who drifted to Nashville, and the Arkansas
regiments of Hardee, who moved on September 18 to reinforce
Johnston.
Buckner was a vigorous exponent of the offensive, and his move to seize Bowling Green almost assumed the nature of a massive invasion into North-Central Kentucky. Johnston's orders to Buckner were to seize Bowling Green and secure a defensive line. Buckner, however, wanted to press further into Kentucky. He saw the value of holding an advance post at Elizabethtown, forty miles southeast of Louisville. Elizabethtown lay south of the Muldraugh's Hills, a range of bluffs that extended from the Ohio River to East Kentucky, north of Cumberland Gap. In possession of the Elizabethtown area, the Confederates could both observe and counter Federal moves from Louisville more easily than from Bowling Green, seventy miles south. At Elizabethtown the Confederates could also draw supplies from the fertile Bluegrass region, and would be in a position to strike the flank of a force which might try to move on Zollicoffer in East Kentucky. At Muldraugh's Hills, the Confederates could also command an excellent group of parallel turnpikes which extended south from Muldraugh's Hills into the weak section of Johnston's line, between Zollicoffer and Buckner. When Buckner reached Bowling Green, he contemplated pushing the line north to the Elizabethtown area. He knew that a large force of Southern Rights Kentuckians allegedly had gathered in the Muldraugh's Hills region. He hoped to
open communications with them, if for no other reason than to initiate guerrilla warfare in the area against the Federals. Major J. W. Hawes was ordered to open communications with these men while Colonel Roger Hanson's Second Kentucky Infantry was sent to hold the Green River crossing at Munfordville. Another column, led by Colonel Ben Hardin Helm, was sent northwest to strike at the Union Home Guards reportedly guarding the locks on Green River near Rochester. Helm led 1500 troops to Rochester, where the locks at the mouth of Big Muddy were destroyed in order to prevent Federal boats from coming up Green River.5

Buckner's two-pronged drive momentarily appeared to be on the verge of turning into a full-scale drive on Elizabethtown. Then the drive stalled. Johnston did not believe that Buckner's small force of 4,000 men could be supported north of Bowling Green. Instead, Buckner was ordered to draw his troops back to Bowling Green. Hawes brought in as many Confederate sympathizers from north of Green River as he could, and the Munfordville bridge was destroyed. Hanson and Helm fell back to Bowling Green, and by September 25, the Federals occupied the country around Elizabethtown.6

Buckner's desire to press north of Green River produced two significant results, even though his plan failed.
The move completely panicked the Federals in Louisville. Hourly, they expected to see the gray vanguard swing in toward Louisville from the pike below Salt River. The commander of the Department of the Cumberland, William Sherman, actually gathered the few Home Guards and volunteers available in Louisville and entrained for Muldraugh's Hills. Unknown to Buckner, Sherman not only expected a move on Louisville, but thought that Buckner was commanding a division instead of the thin brigade which the Kentuckian had at Bowling Green. The fear incited by the lightning move to Green River and by the destruction of the Green River locks proved to be of great help to Johnston in his efforts to mask the real weakness of his force. 7

Another curious result of this "offensive" was that Bowling Green became the center of activity for a pro-offensive bloc. During the autumn of 1861, this group pressured Johnston to advance, and consequently kept his attention centered on Bowling Green. Isham Harris pressed for a winter campaign to drive the Federals into the Ohio River. Buckner urged that John C. Breckinridge, who joined the Confederates at Bowling Green, be allowed to advance with a large column through East Kentucky. Chief Engineer Jeremy Gilmer, who had the ear of both Johnston and Hardee, repeatedly expressed his desire that
Johnston should undertake a winter campaign. General James Alcorn of Mississippi, who arrived with two regiments to reinforce Buckner, expected an offensive. Influential citizens in Memphis and Nashville also pressed Johnston for a move north from Bowling Green. For a time, Johnston himself hoped that he could build up his force to the extent that he could sustain an offensive drive from Bowling Green. This hope focused the greatest part of Johnston's attention on Bowling Green through mid-November. By early December, Johnston had abandoned hope of building up his force to take the offensive because of his awe at the threat from Don Carlos Buell's force in North-Central Kentucky.

There was a less dramatic reason for Johnston's absorption in the problems of the Bowling Green salient. He had been forced into adopting the weak defensive position at Bowling Green, and now became involved in the struggle to improve its defenses. A better place to defend Nashville would have been Nashville itself. Federal engineers were to prove this later, when Nashville became one of the best fortified cities in the South. The town was situated on bluffs on the south bank of the Cumberland River. On the north bank, the approaches to Nashville were cut by a series of steep hills and ridges. On the south bank, the city was encircled by another range of
hills. A third series of hills, which the Federals later fortified, were located within the business and residential sections of the town.\textsuperscript{9}

Even though the position was strong, Johnston was unable to use Nashville, at least as a primary line. Polk's occupation of Columbus had placed the Confederate left wing in a dangerous angle which was vulnerable to an attack from the northeast. Either Polk must be withdrawn or the center must be advanced. Johnston did not believe it was possible to draw Polk back into Tennessee. Johnston feared that the Federals would follow a retreat, and would discover that behind his facade of strength, Johnston had no strong defensive line. Therefore, Johnston decided to fortify Bowling Green, the first point north of Nashville susceptible of defense. The town of Bowling Green, located on three hills, was an excellent site for fortifications. Johnston soon had artillery planted on these hills, and the guns commanded the surrounding area for a mile and a half in every direction.\textsuperscript{10}

Yet the Bowling Green position was basically weak, and Johnston's efforts to remedy its weakness claimed his attention. The main problem was the geography of the region. South of Bowling Green, the rolling bluegrass country extended seventy miles south to Nashville. North of the town of Bowling Green, the terrain was
completely different. The town was located on the south bank of Barren River. North of the river lay the broken, sandy hill country of the Pennyroyal. Further north, the terrain was intersected by the Green River, which flowed west into the Ohio. North of Green River was the Dripping Springs Escarpment, a plateau formation several hundred feet above the country to the south. This poor, rocky plateau was broken by ravines and tributaries flowing down into Green River. Even further north was the Muldraugh's Hills region, which screened Federal activity in the Louisville and Bluegrass plains.11

Good reconnaissance was Johnston's primary need at Bowling Green. In order to defend Tennessee with his original skeleton force of 27,000 troops, he had to know the activities of the enemy beyond this series of topographical barriers, so that a concentration might be effected. Such reconnaissance was almost impossible in the seventy miles of rugged terrain north of Bowling Green. The people of the area, as well as the land itself, masked the enemy's operations. The country from Bowling Green north to Bardstown was Unionist territory. Confederate officers had difficulty in finding local citizens who would penetrate the enemy's lines north of Green River. A cordon of reconnaissance outposts were established
from Hopkinsville on the west to Dripping Springs on the east, but Johnston's officers still complained of the difficulty in securing information. The problem became worse during the winter, when the rains and the mist rising off Green River produced fogs equaled only by the mental fog brought about by a lack of information. This fog of intelligence was concentrated in the area north from Green River to Elizabethtown, the same area in which his scouts located the main body of Sherman's and later Buell's army. Johnston was to become completely fascinated with this intelligence problem, to the neglect of other positions on the Tennessee-Kentucky line.  

Bowling Green presented other defensive problems. To hold this position demanded a tremendous amount of the Army's manpower. South of Green River, a network of turnpikes which an invading Union force could use, spread into southern Kentucky. Only one, the Louisville-Cave City pike, passed through the Bowling Green area. Should the Federals advance, there would be innumerable routes to be covered. On the northwest, the Federals had their choice of the Owensboro, Brandenburg and Elizabethtown-Leitchfield pikes. On the north and northeast, the enemy could move down to Cave City, Bardstown-Glasgow, Columbia-Liberty and Monticello-Bowling Green pikes. To cover all these routes and still maintain reconnaissance
posts exerted a tremendous drain on Johnston's manpower.

The manpower problem was intensified because the line around Bowling Green was an unhealthy place, especially for the troops from areas of warmer climate, such as Texas, Mississippi and West Tennessee. North of Bowling Green lay the cave area of Central Kentucky, a damp, unhealthful region of dripping springs, licks, sinkholes and heavy rains. The problems of cold weather, dampness and lack of camp sanitary facilities badgered the outposts north of Bowling Green. In October, 1861, epidemics broke out along this line. Not only were Johnston's efforts to obtain information hampered, but the sickness reduced the number of effective troops.

The advance stations along Green River were the hardest hit by illness. In T. C. Hindman's command at Bell's Station, an epidemic of measles raged throughout the fall and early winter, and was accompanied by outbreaks of pneumonia and diarrhea. By January, 1862, half of Hindman's force was unable to walk. D. C. Govan's advance post at Dripping Springs was also disabled by a November epidemic of measles, as well as by outbreaks of scurvy. Terry's Texas Rangers, one of Johnston's best scout regiments, was decimated by an epidemic of measles in November at their Oakland post. By December, only one fourth of Terry's men were able to stand roll call.
Johnston's northwest post at Hopkinsville, commanded by General James Alcorn, was hit severely by measles. By the end of November, 800 of Alcorn's men were in make-shift hospitals at Clarksville, Tennessee. Smallpox broke out along Barren River near Bowling Green, and B. W. Avent, Johnston's Surgeon-General, was ordered to vaccinate every regiment. Typhoid fever and influenza were also contracted by the troops on the central line, especially by men not acclimated to the Kentucky weather. By the end of October, the military hospital at Nashville had provided accommodations for 2,000 patients, most of whom were from the Bowling Green area.

Another geographical problem kept Johnston's attention on the Bowling Green district. Ninety miles southwest of Bowling Green was the next salient in Johnston's line, Fort Donelson. The country between the Fort and Bowling Green was flat, bluegrass country, with no defensive works. Upstream from Donelson, the Cumberland River curved to the east until it reached Clarksville, where the river dipped south to Nashville. Clarksville was a vital position, for if a Federal advance broke through the open country between Donelson and Bowling Green, Clarksville could easily be seized and the way to Nashville was open. A further danger in this open area was the presence of Johnston's main line of rail communication with Polk in
West Tennessee. The Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad ran southeast from Bowling Green and crossed the Cumberland River at Clarksville. Should this line be seized, Johnston would have no other rail communication with Polk except the Memphis and Charleston line, far to the rear in North Alabama and Mississippi. Also, northeast of Clarksville, a spur line, the Edgefield and Kentucky, extended from the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville tracks to Nashville. Hence the Federals did not even need to seize Clarksville in order to both cut Johnston's main rail line and procure a quick route to Nashville.¹⁵

These weaknesses of the Bowling Green position placed Johnston in a dilemma. Bowling Green, though inferior to Nashville as a defensive position, must be held. To withdraw to Nashville would expose Polk's flank and Johnston's ruse. If the line did remain at Bowling Green, however, an auxiliary line must be established, for the position in Bowling Green alone was incapable of defending Nashville and Middle Tennessee. Caught between the line he must occupy and the more desirable Nashville position, Johnston became further enmeshed in the problems of a solitary district in his department. In October and early November, his attention was given to the planning of a second defensive line which he hoped could be established at Clarksville and Nashville.¹⁶
At a time when Forts Henry and Donelson badly needed supervision, Johnston sent his chief engineer Gilmer to Nashville and Clarksville to survey the terrain for a second line. Gilmer, who despised the Kentucky climate, was happy to be in Nashville, and went about his duties at a leisurely pace. He spent almost the entire month of November surveying the Nashville defenses. By the end of the month, he had decided on two positions. A river battery was to be constructed on the south bank of the Cumberland below Nashville. On the north bank of the river, a line of breastworks was to be dug on the range of hills that commanded the road approaches to the town. Actually, the proposed land defenses would have demanded less work and would have needed fewer troops to hold if Gilmer had laid out the defenses on the steep bluffs on the south bank of the river. Gilmer, however, wanted to make certain that the breastworks protected the village of Edgefield, on the north bank of the river opposite Nashville. The cream of Nashville society lived at Edgefield, and the young, impressionable Gilmer was undoubtedly pressured to locate the defensive line north of Edgefield.

Satisfied with his work at Nashville, Gilmer went to Clarksville. He laid out the site for a river battery at the mouth of Red River. Plans for field works to be
located north of the town were also formulated. At Nashville and Clarksville, after the initial surveys, Gilmer left the details of construction to subordinates. He was assured by local officials in both towns that plentiful slave labor could be had to build the works. Confident that the line would soon be completed, Gilmer returned to Bowling Green.  

By early December, however, the construction of the secondary line began to create some problems. Gilmer had assumed that the Nashville citizens would be quite willing to lend their slaves for work on the land defenses and the river battery. On December 6, Gilmer's assistant, G. O. Watts, complained that only seven slaves had been volunteered for work on the land defenses. At least 300 laborers would be needed at each of the three road crossings. The next day, Gilmer told Johnston that most of the slaves had already been hired out for the season. He also reported no success in obtaining white laborers, for a large portion of the Nashville laboring class belonged to the militia, which Harris had just called to the field to meet Pillow's "crisis" at Columbus.  

Gilmer was beginning to learn something about Nashville people which Johnston, preoccupied at Bowling Green, never realized. The leading citizens of the town were not seriously interested in building a defensive line around
the city. The reason for this unconcern lay in the self-assured, snobbish attitude of influential Nashvillians. In 1861, Nashville, with the exception of New Orleans, was the largest and most cosmopolitan city south of the Ohio River. Nashville was a city of five daily newspapers, gas lights, a steam fire department, and ten publishing houses. It was an educational center with one of the country's best medical schools at the University of Nashville, the University itself, a fashionable female academy and the Western Military Institute. A group of Nashville families not only formed the social clique of Tennessee in 1861, but also controlled the city's affairs. These people, described by one writer as the "Nashville Gods," lived in elegance in such mansions as Belle Meade, Belmont, Two Rivers, Clover Bottom and Burlington.

The "Nashville Gods" were not interested in the need for laborers on Gilmer's fortifications, or in any other defensive problem of the city. The "Gods" did not feel the same border complex that Louisville and even Memphis citizens felt. Few if any of the Nashville clique remembered the lean years of the 1780's, when Dragging Canoe, the brilliant Chickamauga strategist, almost wiped out the Nashville settlement in the battle of the Bluffs. The enormous prosperity which the city enjoyed in its
golden years of the 1850's had erased these hard frontier memories, and had instilled a complacent, selfish attitude in the minds of the town's leaders.

There were other reasons for the apathy of the Nashville citizens. As explained earlier, there was no pressure bloc which demanded good defenses on the Cumberland. Also, Nashville was the Second Department's production center for war materials, and local businessmen were too busy waxing rich on Military Board contracts to worry about the lack of fortifications. Those influential citizens who would have been concerned were away fighting. The newspaper editor, Zollicoffer, was in East Kentucky. Randall McGavock, the Mayor in 1861, was with the Sons of Erin at Fort Donelson. Isham Harris was busy with his campaign to call out every available man in Tennessee to bolster Johnston's line.

There could also be seen in Nashville a lack of interest in the Confederacy's fortunes. Despite the bluster of the summer of 1861, when the Rock City Guards and Nashville Blues paraded the streets, many Nashvillians were for their city first and the Confederacy second. When the city eventually fell to Buell's army, there was much bowing and scraping on the part of Mayor R. B. Cheatham and other citizens. In March, 1862, Jeremy Gilmer would reflect bitterly on the amazing ease and rapidity with
which the "Gods" adjusted to the horrors of Yankee occupation. Whatever its basis, the Nashville Myth, that absolute trust in the decisions of the "Gods," produced a lethargic attitude in the city that damaged Johnston's plans. By late December, planters still refused to lend their slaves, white volunteers were few, and Gilmer's plans remained on the sketch board.\(^{21}\)

As dangerous as the Myth itself was Johnston's belief that the defenses at Nashville were being constructed. There was an unjustifiable lack of communication between Johnston and Gilmer on conditions at Nashville. This communication lag, together with Johnston's preoccupation with menial details at Bowling Green and Isham Harris' repeated assurances that laborers could be had in abundance, completely misled Johnston as to the state of the Nashville defenses. There is no evidence that Johnston, before he retreated to Nashville in February, 1862, had any idea that the fortifications were not being built. In fact, on Christmas Day, 1861, he confidently wrote Judah Benjamin that the Nashville entrenchments "double the efficiency of my force for the defense of this line." When he wrote this, there was not a single yard of fortifications constructed at Nashville.\(^{22}\)

Another reason for Johnston's fixation upon Bowling Green was that in early October, 1861, the first threat of
a Federal advance against him was reportedly aimed at Bowling Green. When he first came to Tennessee, Johnston had ordered Buckner to Bowling Green and then had gone on to Columbus to confer with Polk. Johnston saw the weakness of Polk's Union City flank, and planned to order Polk to extend his Columbus line west to Mayfield to cover the weak condition of Union City. Had Johnston carried out this plan, Polk's line would have been much better prepared to give Johnston assistance in the early winter of 1862.

The extension of the line was soon forgotten. An urgent message from Buckner arrived at Columbus. A Union force of perhaps 14,000 men was reportedly preparing to cross Green River. Stunned, Johnston ordered every available reinforcement to Bowling Green. A regiment was called from reconnaissance duty on the Cumberland Plateau, every man in Nashville who had a weapon was put on the trains to Bowling Green, and Hardee's 4,000 troops, already en route to Nashville, were diverted to the Kentucky town. By October 13, a worried Johnston had left Columbus to take command of the defense of Bowling Green. He would not leave the Bowling Green district until February, 1862.23

The threat of the advance proved a false alarm, but Johnston's attention was held in Central Kentucky by the need to organize the assembled reinforcements. In fact,
he was so completely engrossed in the work at Bowling Green that he assumed personal command of the center corps, which he titled the "Army of Central Kentucky." The reason for his absorption in the organization of the center corps was more than just a need to bring some order to the scattered commands. Johnston's attention was also captivated by the heavy concentration of officer talent at Bowling Green. The State Army had supplied the basis for the Army of Tennessee's elan, and had given the Army many of its regimental and brigade commanders. By contrast much of the future high command of the Army was unknowingly assembled at Bowling Green. Buckner, retained by Johnston as commander of the first division, would command a corps at Chickamauga, where his career in the Army of Tennessee would end after a dispute with Braxton Bragg. William Hardee, appointed commander of the second division, had more military experience than any other officer in the Army of Tennessee, and was America's foremost authority on infantry tactics. Even so, Hardee's future conduct in the Army as a corps commander would be disappointing. He would always be willing to criticize a commander but never willing to assume the command responsibilities himself. Instead of using his broad military experience to benefit the Army, Hardee was to become a silent, though effective, troublemaker among the high command.
Other officers at Bowling Green were to rise to high rank in the Army, with varying success. T. C. Hindman, commanding a brigade, would command a division at Chickamauga, where he was also to quarrel with Bragg. John C. Breckinridge, assigned to command the Kentucky Brigade, would command the Reserve Corps at Shiloh. Breckinridge disappointed as a corps commander, and quarreled with Bragg over his conduct at Murfreesboro and Chickamauga. The two exceptionally good officers at Bowling Green were Pat Cleburne, commander of Hardee's second brigade, and Nathan Bedford Forrest, who led an independent cavalry battalion. Cleburne became the finest infantry officer in the Army of Tennessee, and Forrest became probably the finest cavalryman in the Confederate service. In the Army of Tennessee's high command, however, good men were the exception. The Army had a large number of generals with weak character and no ability.

Johnston's interest was also tied to Bowling Green by the operation there of the ruse designed to make Sherman and Buell believe that he had a much larger force. In November, Cleburne was sent with 1,600 men on a wide sweep east to the mountains to create the impression that he was leading the advance column of a much larger force. Jacob Biffle's cavalry battalion was sent to make a demonstration in the Glasgow area, and Forrest was sent as far north as Morganfield in a show of force. Infantry was marched back
and forth between Bowling Green and Green River. In late December Forrest smashed into a Union cavalry scouting party at Sacramento and sent the Union troopers reeling back with heavy losses and stories of a huge Rebel force. Terry's Rangers struck a Union column at Green River and fought a bloody engagement in which Terry was killed. From October to December, Johnston used every possible ruse to hold back the Federals while he tried to piece together an army to man the extensive Tennessee lines. 26

Johnston soon found that his strategy might also work in reverse. In November he began receiving widespread reports of Federal advances along Green River. One force was rumored to be marching on Greenville, and another was said to be crossing Green River at Morgantown and Woodbury. Rumors had the Federals concentrating opposite Rochester to force a crossing of Green River, and another heavy column was allegedly gathering further down Green River at Calhoun. These reports were almost all false alarms, but the failure of Confederate intelligence to penetrate north of Green River and gain precise information worried Johnston. By December, the rumored concentration began to narrow to one point. The most consistent information came from T. C. Hindman's scout posts at Oakland and Bell's Station. Hindman's intelligence reports always
located Buell's main force at the villages of Munfordville and Nolin, on the pike between Elizabethtown and Green River.  

By early December, Johnston, although department commander, had become totally engrossed in the affairs of the solitary Bowling Green district. His final commitment to the single district was the result of three interrelated pressures. Hindman's persistent reports, which disturbed Johnston, came at a time when Johnston was already strained by three months' work at Bowling Green. Also, Johnston was frustrated by the failure of reconnaissance north of Green River except in Hindman's area. The result of these pressures was dimly seen in December, only to emerge in full view in February, 1862. Johnston became absolutely preoccupied with Buell's army at Nolin and Munfordville. He was convinced that Buell was the only threat to Middle Tennessee, even though he knew that Henry Halleck's army was in West Kentucky and George Thomas' army was in East Kentucky. By Christmas Day, Johnston was convinced that Buell was preparing to invade Tennessee with 75,000 men. Hindman's intelligence had placed Buell's numbers at only 20,000 but Johnston was convinced that Buell must have four times that number.

Not only did Johnston center his attention on Buell, but he also became convinced that when Buell moved, the
advance would come on Nashville through Central Kentucky. As early as mid-October, Johnston wrote Samuel Cooper that at Bowling Green the Federals "will make the greatest effort...." On Christmas Day, Johnston wrote Harris that the information "continues to convince me that a heavy concentration of force on this line has been made to invade Tennessee on the route to Nashville." The same day, Johnston wrote Benjamin that his information revealed that "every effort has been made by General Buell to concentrate all his strength for a movement upon Tennessee through Central Kentucky...." 28

As January, 1862, approached, Johnston held strongly to these convictions. The result was a further neglect of areas in the department which needed attention, such as the inland river forts. Johnston's belief that the Federal advance would come by Bowling Green overshadowed in his mind the importance of the river forts. If Johnston had any doubts about his convictions, those doubts were erased by new intelligence which he received on December 28. Buckner sent him a curious document obtained from Buell's headquarters' book by a Louisville spy. The document professed to list Buell's complete regimental strength. Buckner gave the intelligence his whole support, terming it "beyond a doubt reliable...." Johnston also believed it, and described the intelligence to Benjamin as
"an accurate statement of the troops under General Buell's command." This was the first concise bit of intelligence Johnston had received from north of Green River, and it served to harden his belief that Buell was his main threat. The document listed Buell's strength as 75,000, precisely the number which Johnston had estimated three days earlier in a letter to Judah Benjamin. Johnston needed no further evidence. As the year ended, the commander of the Second Department more than ever focused his attention on the defense of the Bowling Green line.
Notes


7. Buckner's personal notes on Green River advance, Ms. in NA, West. Dept., T.R., 1861; Nashville operator to Polk, Oct. 1, 1861, in NA, Polk; Thompson, First Kentucky Brigade, 65, 67-9; Liddell Hart, Sherman, 100; Johnston, Johnston, 310.


12. On Oct. 22, Johnston wrote Benjamin: "We have received but little accession to our ranks since the Confederate forces crossed the line; in fact, no such enthusiastic demonstration as to justify any movements not warranted by our ability to maintain our own communications. It is true that I am writing from a Union country...."

13. Statement of Major-General Buell, 13; David B. Harris to Bragg, Sept. 15, 1862, in David B. Harris Papers, Duke University Library.


17. Johnston to Harris, Oct. 26, 1861, Headquarters Book, Tulane; Gilmer to wife, Nov. 3, 1861, Nov. 4, 1861, Nov. 6, 1861, Nov. 9, 1861, Nov. 13, 1861, Nov. 24, 1861, in Gilmer Papers, UNC; Gilmer to V. K. Stevenson, Nov. 26, 1861, Gilmer to Harris, Dec. 3, 1861, Gilmer to Mackall, Dec. 4, 1861, in NA, Letters Sent, Chief of Engineers, Western Department, 1861-1862, Chapter III, Volume 8 (Hereinafter cited as Ch. III, Vol. 8, Engineer).


21. Crabb, "Twilight," 291-9; Stanley F. Horn, "Nashville During the Civil War," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, IV (March 1945), 3-8; Gilmer to wife, March 6, 1862, Gilmer Papers, UNC.


28. OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 549, Vol. 7, pp. 700, 761-2; Johnston to Benjamin, Nov. 8, 1861, Johnston to Harris, Dec. 25, 1861, Johnston to Benjamin, Dec. 25, 28, 1861, in Headquarters Book, Tulane. As early as mid-October, Johnston had pinpointed Bowling Green to be the point of expected attack. In a portion of a letter to Samuel Cooper which was deleted from the actual letter sent, Johnston wrote from Bowling Green that the Federals "will make the greatest effort here...." Oct. 17, 1861, ibid.; On December 25, he wrote Harris that "My information continues to convince me that a heavy concentration of force on this line has been made to invade Tennessee on the route to Nashville." In his letter to Benjamin on December 25, Johnston wrote: "Information from various sources shows that every effort has been made by General Buell to concentrate all his strength for a movement upon Tennessee through Central Kentucky...." ibid.; Buell was actually lobbying for a two-pronged advance. On December 29, he wrote McClellan that he thought all the force that could be collected should advance on the vulnerable river defenses of the Cumberland and Tennessee, between Columbus and Bowling Green. Meanwhile, Buell would advance on Bowling Green, which he thought to be protected by 30,000 troops. Buell argued that unless a two-pronged attack were made, upwards to 60,000 troops could be concentrated against him at Bowling Green. The area of the Cumberland and the Tennessee was under Halleck's jurisdiction, and the months of November and December, 1861, and January, 1862, were spent in dickering between the two commanders as to what type of advance would be made. On December 23, Buell reported his force to be an aggregate of 70,000, with 57,000 present for duty. By December, Buell's command had been renamed the Department of the Ohio. OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 511-513, 520-21; on December 31, the Confederate force on the Bowling Green line had an aggregate present for duty of 22,253, ibid., p. 814.

THE LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS

Albert Sidney Johnston had been department commander for over a month when Adolphus Heiman submitted to Leonidas Polk and Isham Harris a progress report on the Henry and Donelson defenses. The report indicated that little progress had been made since Johnston assumed command of the department. Fort Donelson was manned by only 300 untrained, almost completely unarmed men. A small battery was finally mounted during the first week in October, but as late as October 17, not one artillerist was at Fort Donelson. Also, no defenses against a land approach had yet been constructed. Conditions at Fort Henry also showed little progress. Captain Jesse Taylor's warning to Polk in early September, about the danger to the fort when the winter rains came, were ignored. Taylor had urged the relocation of Fort Henry and the building of another fort opposite Henry on the west bank of the Tennessee. Polk had given neither project any attention. Also, the artillery pieces remained poorly mounted, as they all faced downriver.¹

During the fall of 1861, conditions at these forts failed to improve. The inexcusable weakness of this most vulnerable point in the Tennessee line did not go unnoticed. Heiman, Lloyd Tilghman, and others repeatedly warned Leonidas Polk of the need for bolstering the forts before
winter came. Heiman warned that when the January and February rains came, the Cumberland would rise sufficiently to allow heavy draft gunboats to approach Donelson simultaneously with a move up the Tennessee. By January 1, 1862, these warnings had produced little change in the situation. No effort had been made to relocate Henry and the guns of the river battery were still improperly mounted. An auxiliary position, Fort Heiman, had at last been planned for the river bank opposite Henry, but construction work had not begun. At Donelson, conditions by January 1, 1862, were even worse than at Henry. The entire force of Tilghman's command at the two forts numbered only 4,600 troops, of whom almost 2,000 were unarmed. The total effective force at Donelson numbered 600. During the fall of 1861, some artillery instructors had visited Donelson, but in January, 1862, there were still no trained men to man the river batteries. Only one third of the planned earthworks were under construction and none had been completed.²

In late December, Lloyd Tilghman warned that no other point in the entire Confederacy needed more assistance than did the weak river forts at Donelson and Henry. The neglect of Donelson and Henry during the fall of 1861 was caused by Johnston's failure to solidify and temper the command structure of the forts. A collapse of command
responsibility was already evident in the fall of 1861. This breakdown of the command structure of the forts occurred at three levels— the district command, the immediate command of the forts, and the department command.  

The lack of supervision of the river defenses on the Cumberland and the Tennessee stemmed from the failure of the district commander, Polk, to meet his responsibilities. Polk was retained as commander of the West Tennessee district when Johnston arrived, and his command area was extended to include all defenses in Tennessee between the Mississippi River and the west bank of the Cumberland River. Polk knew the weak condition of the forts, but he had become as fascinated with the defense of Columbus as Johnston had with affairs at Bowling Green. Thus Polk ignored Taylor's warnings about the weakness of Fort Henry. When Heiman commanded Henry and Donelson in September and October, 1861, Polk sent him no aid except one regiment of infantry and a few cavalry companies, all badly armed. When Tilghman took command of the forts in November, Polk sent him no troops despite Tilghman's repeated pleas. In late November, a group of North Alabama citizens appealed to Polk to strengthen the Tennessee River defenses. The citizens were told that if they were concerned about the river's defense, then they should raise a home guard unit and defend the river themselves.
Polk was not only personally disinterested in the problems of the inland river forts, but also balked at cooperating with anyone else who took any initiative in the matter. In October, 1861, there were only three engineers in the entire Second Department, and Polk had cornered all three for work on his Mississippi River forts. Johnston ordered one of them, Lieutenant Joseph Dixon, to go to Donelson and superintend the work there. Polk, in a manner that can only be described as insubordinate, first delayed the engineer's departure, and then flatly told Johnston that neither Dixon nor the other two officers could be spared. Johnston had to issue two additional orders to Polk before Dixon was sent. In fact, except for some half-armed cavalry companies sent to Henry and four artillery officers sent to Donelson on a few days' loan, Polk did not volunteer to send any troops to the inland forts during the fall. The few other troops which were sent to the forts were ordered there by Johnston. Johnston was even forced to order Polk to send four companies of infantry to guard the Danville, Tennessee, bridge, where the Memphis, Clarksville, and Ohio Railroad crossed the Tennessee River.  

While there was a neglect of supervision of the forts at a district level, there was an excess of command in the Henry-Donelson area itself. In the fall of 1861, two
officers were assigned commands in the area. Johnston ordered Gilmer to command the preparation of defenses at Bowling Green, Nashville, Clarksville, Henry, and Donelson. Lloyd Tilghman was assigned to command the defenses at Henry and Donelson. Gilmer and Tilghman held opposite views on the necessity of acting swiftly to provide good defensive works at Henry and Donelson. This conflict resulted in a maze of orders and counter orders that only hampered defensive efforts. Unfortunately, while Tilghman was more concerned than Gilmer with the weakness of the two forts, Gilmer was more influential with Johnston than was Tilghman.

Jeremy Gilmer exerted a great influence upon the condition of the Henry and Donelson defenses during the fall and early winter of 1861. In October, Johnston, with his usual manner of completely trusting an untried subordinate, assigned Gilmer to the task of supervising the works. Then, Johnston, confident that a strong line would be built, turned back to affairs at Bowling Green. Though Johnston was unaware, Gilmer almost completely ignored the Henry and Donelson defenses during the fall. There were several factors which produced Gilmer's lack of interest in Henry and Donelson. One reason was Gilmer's personal attitude toward his work. Gilmer was not happy in the Second Department. He had hoped to be assigned
to superintend the Savannah defenses instead of being
sent to Bowling Green. Not only were his wife and many
friends in Savannah, but Gilmer was partial to the warmer
coastal climate.

When he came to Bowling Green, he was homesick,
unhappy with his assignment, and bored. Nothing seemed
to go right for Gilmer. He had an unpleasant trip from
Georgia to Kentucky, and complained of the "common cars"
of the railroad and of the poor hotels en route. No
sooner had he arrived at Bowling Green than the autumn
rains began, and he developed a severe cold. Other
occurrences continued to irritate him. His wife did not
write often enough and he feared she was ill at Savannah.
He was unhappy with his rank as major, and thought he
should be promoted to brigadier. In his letters to his
wife, he showed no interest in his work on Johnston's line.
The letters were filled only with detailed accounts of
what he would do if he were fortifying Savannah, and of
wishes that he were in Savannah. Gilmer simply began his
assignment with an indifferent, unpleasant attitude. He
characterized this attitude when he wrote: "This is a mean
life for us to live my dear wife, is it not? And the worst
is, this mean life may last a long time."

Another reason for Gilmer's disinterest in the inland
river defenses was a product of the lack of communication
between Johnston and the engineer. Gilmer did not think there was any need for hurrying along the work on the defenses. The reason for his attitude was that Gilmer considered himself an expert on the time and manner of the expected Federal advance into Tennessee. Privately, he formulated a dangerous opinion that would hamper work on Henry and Donelson. Gilmer prepared his own time schedule for the advance. He expected Henry Halleck's army to move down the Mississippi against Polk, but did not expect this move could be made until spring. Reports indicated that Halleck's predecessor, John C. Fremont, had all but wrecked the organization of the army, and Gilmer did not think that Halleck "will venture on an exploration so hazardous as the descent of the Mississippi--with such a rabble for an army...." 7

Gilmer also did not expect an advance on Middle Tennessee either in the fall or in the winter. He was confident that snow, ice, and mud on Kentucky roads would make an advance by Buell impossible. As early as December 1, Gilmer remarked, "I consider the campaign in Ky. essentially closed...." On December 4 he added that this cessation of operations would be to Johnston's advantage since the Confederates would be better prepared by spring to resist invasion, "certainly much better than we are now." On January 10, Gilmer reiterated his opinion
with an amazing statement of overconfidence. He wrote his wife of the Federal advance, that "my opinion is they won't come--at least, not before next April or May." Confident that his invasion time schedule was correct, Gilmer saw no urgency in bolstering the Henry and Donelson defenses in the fall and winter. 8

Also, Gilmer wasted much time sulking over Johnston's failure to take the offensive. When he came to Bowling Green, Gilmer saw only one bright spot in what appeared to him a dismal future. He hoped that Johnston would move north and take Louisville. On October 15, as he waited in Nashville for the train to Bowling Green, he wrote his wife that "I is by no means impossible--nor improbable, that we will winter in Louisville--the place you love so much." Two days later at Bowling Green, he was shocked to learn that Johnston did not plan to move forward. Chagrined, he wrote, "I thought we would advance towards Louisville at once but I fear such is not to be the policy." Later, Gilmer bemoaned that "I much fear our fall campaign will not be as active as I anticipated when I left you." Only by the end of November had Gilmer reconciled himself to the fact that there would be no offensive that fall. Meanwhile, though Chief of Engineers, he behaved like a frustrated infantry commander. 9

Even if Gilmer had been of a mind to work on the inland
river defenses, it is doubtful that he would have accomplished much. His time had to be divided among too many other projects. The Bowling Green-Nashville line had first priority, and Gilmer spent weeks working on defenses at Bowling Green and then Nashville. He did not even go to Donelson and Henry until November, after he casually mentioned to his wife that while looking around at Clarksville, he "may" go to Fort Donelson to "size up" the defenses. 10

Once at Donelson, Gilmer again delayed work on the fortifications. Young Captain Joseph Dixon, supposedly assigned to work on the defenses at Donelson, had become intrigued with the idea of strengthening not only Donelson but several other points downriver as well. Fifteen miles below Donelson on the Cumberland was the river landing of Line Port. This site had two advantages which Donelson did not have. Fortifications there would guard the complex of iron works and rolling mills which lay between the Tennessee and the Cumberland Rivers north of Line Port. These iron works were owned by prominent Nashvillians who probably exerted pressure on the young officer to shift the defensive point from Donelson to Line Port. Also, three miles below Line Port, the channel of the river was narrowed at Line Island. The narrow channel and shoals there rendered the river difficult
for heavy gunboats to navigate in ordinary stages of
the river. Dixon thought Line Port was superior to
Donelson as a defensive position. Yet, instead of either
relocating the Donelson defenses at Line Port or concen-
trating his energies to improve conditions at Donelson,
Dixon committed a serious error. He divided his time
and energy, as well as the available manual labor,
between Donelson, Line Island, and a third position at
Ingram's Shoals, further downriver.

When Gilmer arrived at Donelson, he repeated Dixon's
mistake. Gilmer fell into line with Dixon's ideas on
spreading the river defenses, even though Johnston had
explicitly ordered Gilmer to Donelson to work on the
position there and at Fort Henry. In fact, Gilmer became
involved in more projects than had Dixon. Not only were
the two projects downriver continued, but Gilmer began a
third. He conceived the idea of blockading the river
channel below Donelson. Such a task demanded not only
Gilmer's time but also a large force of laborers to handle
the blocks and ropes used to hoist the obstructions into
the river. Gilmer even experimented with the idea of con-
verting a steamboat into a gunboat for defense on the
Cumberland. Too many projects for Gilmer to supervise
were planned for the few slave laborers volunteered to
work at Donelson. The result was that by January, 1862,
the most vital projects had been neglected. In November, Gilmer should have begun work on land defenses at Donelson, but this work was not begun until January. Gilmer should also have spent his energies in attempting to rectify the poor location of Fort Henry. Fort Heiman had been planned for this purpose, yet by January, the auxiliary fort remained only a plan. By repeating Dixon's error, Gilmer had neglected the areas that were supposedly the reason for his being at Donelson.  

It was this neglect of vital areas which embroiled Gilmer in a controversy with Lloyd Tilghman that also delayed work on the river defenses. Tilghman, a former commander in the Kentucky State Guard, was one of the spokesmen in the Second Department for strong defenses at Henry and Donelson. While on duty at Hopkinsville, he became concerned with the weakness of the inland river line, and began writing letters to Johnston warning of the line's weakness. On his own time, Tilghman made a trip to the forts in early November to see what needed to be done, and arranged a meeting with Gilmer to discuss the defense situation. In November, Tilghman, on Polk's recommendation, was ordered by Johnston to take command of Forts Donelson and Henry.  

When he arrived at the forts, Tilghman was shocked with the visible neglect, and sent the first of a series
of three warnings to Polk. The other two warnings were to come in January and February. Tilghman complained of the large number of unarmed men and the lack of land defenses. He begged for some field artillery, as well as additional heavy guns for the river works. Tilghman argued that the occupation of the ground across the river from Henry at the projected Fort Heiman was "an absolute necessity." Field artillery would be required at Heiman, as would laborers to dig the fortifications. The only laborers available in the area were at Line Port, and on the river below Donelson. Despite Tilghman's pleas, Polk sent Tilghman no troops, field artillery, river guns, or laborers.  

Tilghman's warnings went unheeded for two reasons. He was reporting to Polk, who cared little for the river forts. In April, 1862, the Bishop would all but directly admit that he had suggested that Tilghman command the forts in order to rid himself of the responsibility. Polk had hoped that since communications between Donelson and Bowling Green were more reliable than those between Donelson and Columbus, Tilghman would take his problems elsewhere. Tilghman, however, could not take his problems to Bowling Green. Not only was he supposed to report to Polk, but Tilghman had fared poorly in a dispute with Gilmer, because Johnston had such complete confidence in
his chief engineer. When he first took command in November, Tilghman saw that manpower was being wasted on the various projects which Dixon and Gilmer had instigated. Tilghman realized that the slavepower which Gilmer was expending below Donelson was needed for the construction of breastworks at Donelson and Heiman. Consequently, on November 27, Tilghman ordered S. P. Glenn, the civil engineer in charge of the project of obstructing the Cumberland, to cease work immediately. Glenn complained to Gilmer, who became enraged. Gilmer ordered Glenn to continue the work, and protested to Johnston that Tilghman was interfering with the work. Tilghman tried to explain to Johnston that the obstruction project was badly planned and represented a waste of effort. His argument failed. He was curtly informed by Johnston's headquarters that in the future he was not to interfere with Gilmer's activities.  

For Gilmer, this was only one of many disputes that also wasted valuable time. The young engineer found it difficult to cooperate with anyone who questioned his progress on the river defenses. In November, even Pillow intervened in Tilghman's behalf and attempted to persuade Dixon to assist on the Henry-Heiman fortifications. Gilmer told Pillow to mind his own affairs. At the same time, Gilmer was in a dispute with V. K. Stevenson at
Nashville. Gilmer accused Stevenson of a deliberate lack of cooperation in furnishing all of the materials which Gilmer demanded for his grandiose efforts. These disputes, especially the Tilghman-Gilmer feud, indicated the complete breakdown of command at the river forts. Even Gilmer was forced to admit that one commander should have the complete authority at the river defenses. Of course, he was quick to point out that he should have that authority.  

Polk's disinterest in the affairs of the eastern edge of his district and Gilmer's inexcusable neglect of his duties at Henry and Donelson both indicated a command failure at a departmental level. Throughout the fall and winter of 1861-1862, Johnston was totally unaware of the debacle that existed at the inland forts. There is no evidence that he even knew that the forts were in a defenseless condition. Instead, his absolute trust in Gilmer and his preoccupation with menial tasks at Bowling Green led him to believe that the forts were strong. In November, Johnston assured Benjamin that Donelson "is in a state of defense...," and that Fort Henry "is a strong work, and sufficiently garrisoned." Of course, this ignorance of actual conditions at the forts was not all Johnston's fault. Polk volunteered no information to Johnston as to the conditions at Henry and Donelson, and
offered no aid to bolster the defense of that part of his own district. Gilmer failed to keep Johnston apprised of his work. Yet the final blame must rest with Johnston. He simply was unable to communicate with his subordinates. For example, he probably never knew that Gilmer did not believe the Federals would attack until April or May. Johnston himself did not hold this view, and on one occasion said that anyone who did not expect a winter advance by the Federals was deluded. This serious difference of opinion could have been resolved by more rapport between commander and lieutenant, but instead it was a prime cause of Gilmer's dilatory policy. Less absorption with Central Kentucky affairs and a stronger hand with Polk might have forced Polk to meet his responsibilities at Henry and Donelson.  

By the end of December, the complex of command failures--district, area, and departmental--had combined to make the inland river defenses the most vulnerable spot on the Tennessee line.


6. Gilmer to wife, Oct. 4, 13, 15, 19, 25, Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 1861, in Gilmer Papers, UNC. On Nov. 24, Gilmer wrote that he had not heard from his wife in seventeen days and that "I am almost crazy with disappointment- uncertainty, doubts and fears....What can this mean?" On Oct. 25, he wrote of his major's rank that "a majority is small rank compared to a Brig. Generalcy!"

7. Gilmer to wife, Nov. 24, 1861, Gilmer Papers, UNC.

8. On Dec. 11, Gilmer wrote, "We hear but little of Halleck operating in Missouri- and I am still of the opinion that he found the Federal army assigned to him in such a condition of confusions & inefficiency that he was afraid to venture on an expedition of so much doubt and difficulty as the descent of the Mississippi." Gilmer to wife, Dec. 11, 1861, Gilmer Papers, UNC; ibid., Dec. 1, 1861; on Dec. 4, he wrote, "It seems almost a necessity to terminate active operations for the winter," ibid., Dec. 4, 1861; Dec. 29, 1861, Jan. 5, 1862. On Jan. 5, he wrote, "The risk of attacking Bowling Green with its intrenchments is too great for them, and they cannot venture to pass us by, to the
right or the left- thus exposing their flank & rear to our attack at will. The result will be, most likely, that both armies will remain in status quo until next spring- A winter campaign in Kentucky is next to an impossibility." On January 10, Gilmer wrote, "The recent & present rains are putting the country in such a condition that it is next to impossible to move armies." ibid., Jan. 10, 1862, ibid.

9. Johnston to Cooper, Jan. 22, 1862, Headquarters Book, Tulane; Johnston to Benjamin, Nov. 8, 1861, ibid.; Gilmer to wife, Nov. 26, 28, Dec. 4, 8, 11, 14, 22, 1861, in Gilmer Papers, UNC. On Jan. 2, Gilmer wrote, "I do not think the Yankees can come up to the scratch this winter...Stormy winter weather is very threatening to day and when cold rains & snows come on them, they cannot come, with any promise of success- Under such circumstances, the past shows they will not risk a battle." Gilmer to wife, Jan. 2, 1862, ibid. Johnston listed Sherman, and later Buell, as his opponent in periodical reports to Richmond. See Johnston to Cooper, Oct. 27, 1861, Johnston to Benjamin, Nov. 8, 15, Dec. 25, 30, 1861, in Headquarters Book, Tulane. Gilmer also considered Buell the opponent. On Dec. 6, he wrote that he did not think "that Buell can advance through the center of Ky. at this late season of the year." Gilmer to wife, Dec. 6, 1861, Gilmer Papers, UNC. See also Gilmer to wife, Oct. 15, 17, 19, 1861, ibid.; on Nov. 28, Gilmer wrote his wife that "Our enemy is afraid to advance upon us and I fear that the defensive policy of the Confederacy will prevent us from advancing far enough to force the invaders into a fight." ibid.

10. The relation between Gilmer's slowness to organize defenses and his hopes for an offensive are shown when, on Nov. 6, he wrote his wife from Nashville, "My reconnaissance here is far from being complete- hence I expect to return here after a short time, unless we make a rapid advance towards Louisville. In that case Nashville will need no defenses I am sure." Gilmer to wife, Nov. 6, 1861, Gilmer Papers, UNC; see also, Gilmer to wife, Oct. 17, 19, 23, Nov. 8, 24, Dec. 20, 1861, ibid.; Gilmer to E. B. Sayers, Dec. 10, 1861, in NA, Ch. III, Vol. 8, Engineer. The relative importance in Gilmer's mind of the Nashville and Donelson works is illustrated. On Jan. 29, 1862, Gilmer wrote W. W. Mackall that "By some authority negroes are being impressed in Williamson County for Fort Donelson. This interferes with the call for Nashville. Can the Donelson call be countermanded." Gilmer to Mackall, Jan. 29, 1862, ibid.


16. Gilmer to Mackall, Nov. 24, 1861, in NA, Ch. III, Vol. 8, Engineer. Johnston expressed his confidence in Gilmer to Benjamin on Dec. 25, when he wrote that the defensive works Gilmer was building at Nashville would double the efficiency of Johnston's force for the defense of Bowling Green. Johnston to Benjamin, Dec. 25, 1861, Headquarters Book, Tulane. A early as Nov. 8, Johnston's lack of knowledge of the weakness of the forts was shown. Johnston labeled Henry "a strong work, and sufficiently garrisoned by an excellent regiment." He also said on Nov. 8 of Fort Donelson that "By this time it is in a state of defense...." Johnston to Benjamin, Nov. 8, 1861, ibid.
Felix Zollicoffer has been the most criticized of all Confederate generals. He has been labeled as an inept strategist, a political general, and a soldier completely incapable of leading troops. Zollicoffer has been accredited with poor leadership at Mill Springs, and especially with stupidity in ordering an attack on the Union position there. All of these errors have been blamed on a general who was assigned to command the longest section of Johnston's line, with the smallest force and the largest percentage of unarmed men in his force of any district commander in Tennessee. Zollicoffer's line also lay in the most rugged terrain in Tennessee, the Cumberland and Unaka Mountain ranges. This area was also the poorest food-producing area in Tennessee, contained the largest amount of Unionist activity, and possessed the worst roads and other lines of communication. Moreover, "Zollicoffer's defeat" at Mill Springs occurred when the East Tennessee command had already passed to George Crittenden. It was Crittenden, not Zollicoffer, who ordered the advance that ended with Zollicoffer lying dead in the pelting rains on Fishing Creek. Yet it would be Zollicoffer who would receive the blame of historians.¹

It is true that Zollicoffer was a political general who had seen only limited military service in the Seminole
War. Before the summer of 1861, Zollicoffer was an active Whig politician in Tennessee and editor of the powerful Nashville Republican Banner and True Whig. Despite his Whig affiliation, he was given a brigadier general's commission in the State Army by Harris, for Zollicoffer had been an outspoken member of the Governor's secession bloc. Later, Zollicoffer was commissioned brigadier general in the Confederate Army and sent to command in East Tennessee. When Johnston came to Tennessee, Zollicoffer was retained as district commander in East Tennessee. During the fall of 1861, Zollicoffer conducted an almost brilliant campaign in East Kentucky, only to have the army which he had built destroyed at Mill Springs in January, 1862. To blame the Mill Springs disaster on Zollicoffer alone is a mistake, for the defeat was the culmination of a series of problems which he faced during the fall and early winter of 1861-1862. These problems are significant, for they were representative of logistical and communication problems that existed all along the Kentucky-Tennessee line. The heavy concentration of these problems in Zollicoffer's command, as will be seen, was a vital factor in the collapse of Johnston's right wing.  

Although he was later criticized, Zollicoffer was actually a capable strategist. During the four months he was in command, his use of the defensive-offensive to
stall a Federal drive on East Tennessee revealed exceptional ability. In September and October, after securing Cumberland Gap, he moved his force north of the Gap along the Wilderness Road. He hoped to relieve the pressure on Buckner's new line in Central Kentucky, and also to keep the Federals on the defensive in his own area. Zollicoffer knew that a Union force of 20,000 men led by George Thomas was gathering at Camp Dick Robinson, the Rockcastle Hills, and other points with the intention of advancing on Cumberland Gap. He had information also that Thomas was to work in conjunction with East Tennessee Tories to capture Cumberland Gap and cut the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad.

To counter this threat, Zollicoffer could do either of two things. He could launch an offensive into the Kentucky Bluegrass to force Thomas back. He wished to do this, but yet did not feel that he could logistically sustain an invasion that far into Kentucky. His total force on the mountain line was only 3,549 troops, and his only reserves were 3,600 troops in East Tennessee. Almost 1,500 of the reserves were unarmed. Zollicoffer had only one battery of field artillery. In early October, his troops had less than five days' rations. The road from Cumberland Gap to the Bluegrass led through 150 miles of the most barren region in Kentucky, strong in Union sentiment but destitute of supplies.
The only alternative was to begin a series of thrusts and jabs to keep Thomas occupied until the Confederates could assume the offensive. Cavalry was sent to Williamsburg and to Harlan County to break up pro-Union assemblies. In September, when news was received that Federal troops were at Barboursville, Zollicoffer sent a detachment of his force under Colonel Joel Battle to drive out the Federals. Battle ambushed the Union troops while they were foraging in one of the scarce corn fields south of the town, and pushed them out of Barboursville. On September 26, another column led by Colonel James Rains slipped into the mountain wilderness and struck sixty-five miles north of Cumberland Gap at Laurel Bridge. Union recruits were dispersed and their supplies were captured. Meanwhile, a second column under Colonel D. H. Cummings raided the valuable Goose Creek Salt Works. 4

Zollicoffer found in October that he must revise his strategy. In mid-October he learned that a column led by General Albion Schoepf was advancing on Cumberland Gap via London, Kentucky. To stall this drive, Zollicoffer launched his most vigorous thrust. His entire division made a forced march eighty miles north on the Wilderness Road, and fell on Schoepf's troops at Rockcastle Hills. The attack failed, for the Union position, protected by
rocky gorges, steep bluffs, and fallen timbers, was too strong to carry.

This setback at Rockcastle Hills convinced Zollicoffer he must change his strategy. The loss demonstrated the difficulty of conducting defensive-offensive operations on the narrow, barren mountain roads in East Kentucky, where supporting columns were far to the rear in Tennessee and subsistence was scarce. Zollicoffer saw that he was in a dilemma. The further north he moved to stall a Federal drive, the longer his supply line became, for he could not live off the desolate country. Yet if he chose to await a Federal column near his base at Cumberland Ford, he would lose the advantages of surprise and choice of field. Also, the Federal column would probably become stronger as it moved through eastern Kentucky, where Union recruiting was heavy.\(^5\)

Another factor compelled Zollicoffer to revamp his strategy. By the end of October, his intelligence indicated a heavy buildup of Thomas' force and a change in Thomas' own strategy. Reconnaissance reported the Union drive would not come into East Tennessee via Cumberland Gap, but that Thomas would advance on one of the routes west of the Gap which were on the unguarded portion of the line between the Bowling Green force and Zollicoffer. West of Cumberland Gap were five routes into Tennessee, and
Thomas might turn Zollicoffer's flank by taking any of the routes. Three of these ways, Roger's, Wheeler's, and Big Creek Gaps, were within fifty miles of Cumberland Gap, on the mountain ridges to the southwest. Two other routes were far to the west on the rugged Cumberland Plateau. One of these, the Albany (Kentucky)-Jamestown (Tennessee) road, was a good pike and also gave the Federals the advantage of maneuver. A force moving from Somerset, Kentucky, could advance either southwest via Albany or southeast toward the Cumberland Gap area. The terrain made it impossible to determine which route would be taken until the advance was long under way. A second route on the Cumberland Plateau, the Tompkinsville, Kentucky road, intersected the main road leading between Knoxville and Nashville, and the Federals could easily cut communications between Middle and East Tennessee by moving this way.

By the first week of November, Zollicoffer was convinced the Federals would advance on the Albany route. To counter this expected move, he ordered a shift of his line—and his strategy. His troops were to be pulled back from eastern Kentucky into Tennessee, and then marched west to the Cumberland Plateau, where his army would again move north into Central Kentucky. Zollicoffer's object was to strike Thomas before he could concentrate all of his forces in the central region. Zollicoffer knew that once Thomas
was entrenched in South-Central Kentucky, the Federal railroad connections would allow a concentration either against Hardee's right at Bowling Green or Zollicoffer's left. Also, Zollicoffer hoped that by moving closer to the Bowling Green sector, Buckner and Hardee would join him in the move to force Thomas out of the region.6

During November, the Confederates in eastern Kentucky began the move west. As he moved, Zollicoffer sealed off every entrance into Tennessee. Cumberland Gap was left in the hands of Colonel James Rains. With two regiments, breastworks, and a seven-gun battery, the Gap was in a good defensive condition. Roger's, Wheeler's, and Big Creek Gaps were also blocked by small garrisons, breastworks, and felled timber. The Confederate force then crossed the Cumberland Plateau and turned north into the Cumberland River basin. Zollicoffer halted at Mill Springs, a village on the south bank of the river. Here he hoped to receive supplies from Nashville by steamboat rather than by road from Knoxville, as he had done at Cumberland Gap.7

At this point, he made a tactical error. He commanded some rafts, and crossed his troops to the north bank of the river. On the south bank, he could only observe the buildup of Thomas' army and had no chance to strike at scattered columns. Also, while he remained on the south side, it was possible for the Union army to veer
to the southeast and attempt to force a passage in
the area between Mill Springs and Cumberland Gap. To
prevent such a move, Zollicoffer must either move north
of the river and thwart it, or else must remain on the
Cumberland Plateau until he determined the enemy's route.
The Plateau was a barren region and his army could not
subsist there. Supplies could not be brought in, for
the roads were impassable in winter. It was also a
region of Unionist sentiment, and local residents offered
little food or information to Confederates. Zollicoffer's
only choice was to cross the Cumberland and strike Thomas'
force before it became strong enough to drive his own
troops back into the Cumberland River. 8

Although the move to the north bank seemed necessary
for logistical and reconnaissance purposes, it was ex-
tremely hazardous from a tactical viewpoint. Zollicoffer's
troops were both badly armed and poorly disciplined. They
had been in mountain service, and were accustomed to
operating in small, individual raiding parties. They had
seen little time for drilling, for most of them had been
actively engaged in East Kentucky since their arrival in
East Tennessee. They had little food, only a few artillery
pieces and practically no reserve ammunition. Entrenching
tools, needed to dig fortifications on the north bank,
must be sent from Nashville.
Yet Zollicoffer confidently expected them to be capable of launching an offensive drive into Central Kentucky. Zollicoffer's mistake was that his plan, though a good one, depended upon too many individuals for success. His plan was to cross the Cumberland, build entrenchments opposite Mill Springs at Beech Grove, await reinforcements from Knoxville, and then advance on that part of Thomas' force concentrating at Columbia, Kentucky. Time became precious. Reinforcements and supplies must arrive before Thomas' army became too large to defeat. The longer Zollicoffer must wait, the less his chances for success became, and the greater the danger was that his undermanned division would be attacked while isolated on the north bank of the Cumberland River.9

No sooner had Zollicoffer crossed the river than a series of problems began to delay his plan. These problems were felt everywhere on Johnston's line, but especially at Mill Springs, where time was all-important. The first problem was a lack of arms. At Mill Springs, most of Zollicoffer's men carried old flintlock muskets and half of his Knoxville reserve force was totally unarmed. This shortage was a departmental problem, for Johnston had inherited the arms dilemma of the State Army. Men were available in abundance, but Johnston could not arm them. In September, he needed 30,000 arms for men already
in the Army who had no weapons. Johnston's force, like the state army, was a "paper army." Many of the regiments listed as serviceable were completely unarmed. Polk had unarmed regiments at Fort Pillow, Forts Donelson and Henry, Trenton, Union City, and Henderson Station. Two regiments at Memphis were unarmed, as well as four at Columbus. Colonel W. A. Quarles' regiment at Clarksville could muster only 317 guns, two thirds of which would not even fire. At Huntsville, Alabama, Leroy Walker's four regiments, intended to reinforce Zollicoffer, were completely without arms. 10

During the fall of 1861, Johnston used every available means to obtain both arms and men. Although he always had more troops than he could arm, he felt that more men were needed to effect the ruse of appearing to have a much stronger force. Johnston's idea was to place these unarmed men in training camps and arm them as guns became available. Requests for arms and men were sent to Harris, to Governors Thomas Moore of Louisiana, John Pettus of Mississippi, and A. B. Moore of Alabama, and to General Braxton Bragg at Pensacola. None were able to give Johnston much assistance. Tennessee had been almost depleted of men and weapons. Moore of Alabama explained he needed the available men for seacoast defenses, and that no arms were on hand to send. Bragg explained he had no extra guns to send. Moore of Louisiana replied he could send no aid. 11
East Tennessee felt the weapons shortage most keenly. Zollicoffer had been unable to equip a reserve force that was now needed at Mill Springs. Of the reserves in Knoxville when he moved to Mill Springs, not a single regiment was fully armed. The Thirty-eighth Tennessee had 998 men but only 250 guns, 200 of which were unserviceable. The Thirty-ninth Tennessee had 771 troops but only 200 rifles, shotguns, and muskets. Most of these 200 guns had been classified as unfit for service. At Chattanooga, the Thirty-eighth Tennessee, 850 strong, was armed with 500 flintlock muskets. 12

These regiments were the best armed units in Colonel William H. Carroll's reserve brigade, which Zollicoffer was anxiously awaiting in December. Carroll, however, did not get to Mill Springs in December. He did not even leave Knoxville to join Zollicoffer until January 16, 1862, more than six weeks after Zollicoffer had planned the move for which Carroll was needed. While Carroll delayed, Thomas continued to build his strength, and Zollicoffer's initial advantage of concentration slowly melted away. The reason for Carroll's delay was indicative of serious problems felt in Johnston's department, that involved the arms problem, Johnston's relations with Zollicoffer, and Richmond's attitude toward the West. 13

First, Carroll was a victim of the arms dilemma.
When he first organized his brigade in September, 1861, he obtained about 2,000 old country rifles that needed repair. He put them in repair shops at Memphis, Nashville, and Murfreesboro, with assurances that the guns would be ready by mid-October. Yet when Carroll was ordered to reinforce Zollicoffer in November, not a single gun had been repaired. Desperate for arms, Carroll found 400 old weapons in the Memphis arsenal. These weapons were an almost totally useless collection of old double-barreled shotguns, muskets, and pikes. By December 13, Carroll was in Knoxville with 4,000 men, but only 300 were properly armed. Several hundred others carried old hunting rifles which Carroll labeled as worthless.  

Once in East Tennessee, Carroll was confronted with another problem. In the fall of 1861, the authorities in Richmond generally ignored Johnston's problems on the Tennessee line. There was little communication as to grand strategy, what was expected of Johnston, and what his Army's needs were. Occasionally, the Central Government would suddenly intervene in Johnston's affairs in a manner that crippled his efforts. In September, for example, after Johnston issued his call for troops and arms, he was rebuked by Judah Benjamin for calling on Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia for troops and arms. Benjamin informed Johnston that he was to restrict his calls to Mississippi, North
Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Since Tennessee and Mississippi were already depleted of arms, and Kentucky was mainly in Federal hands, this left little territory for Johnston to scour.

Usually, in the fall of 1861, Richmond authorities intervened in the West only when something was needed in another area. Benjamin ordered Johnston not to use the supplies at Nashville but to live off the country. The Nashville supplies were being saved for Lee's army. Again, the Commissary General ordered all meat stored at Nashville to be sent to Richmond. This order forced the commissary officer at Nashville to cancel Johnston's order for 24,000 rations. This cancellation came late in September during Buckner's move into Kentucky, when rations were badly needed. The Quartermaster General ordered all supplies at Nashville, such as tents and blankets, to be shipped to Richmond. Johnston protested that such a move would cause suffering among his troops from the Gulf States especially during the Kentucky winter.¹⁵

Richmond seemed to have no understanding of Johnston's problems. Part of the reason for this lack of communication was Johnston's passive attitude toward pressing the Richmond authorities for things needed in his command. Another explanation was that Richmond did not realize how weak the Army of Tennessee was, due to the existence of
Johnston's "paper army." In December, Benjamin argued that Johnston must have twice the number of 10,000 effective men that were reported at Bowling Green. Benjamin did not realize that many of the regiments, even among the 10,000, were poorly armed, if armed at all. Many were plagued with epidemics of measles and other diseases. Richmond's lack of knowledge of the Tennessee situation was demonstrated in February, 1862. When P. G. T. Beauregard came to Tennessee, he was surprised that Johnston's force was so weak, for he had been assured in Virginia that the Army of Tennessee had 70,000 men, instead of 45,000 partially armed troops.16

Richmond especially did not understand the arms situation. Many of Johnston's regiments which had no arms were kept in instruction camps until local officials could find some private arms for them. Such procurement took time, for many of the weapons had to be repaired first. Yet Johnston wanted the unarmed troops in camp, both to effect his ruse and to keep them nearby so they would be available if some arms did come. The bulk of this unarmed force was composed of twelve-month volunteers raised in Tennessee and North Alabama.17

In the fall of 1861, Richmond struck at the heart of Johnston's reserve force. Benjamin ordered Johnston to disband all unarmed, twelve-month regiments and not to
muster in any more such regiments in the future. In essence, this order meant that every soldier not already on the forward Kentucky line must be sent home. Johnston and Isham Harris protested that such a policy would hurt the morale of the volunteers already in camp and would harm the prospects of future enlistment campaigns. Also, the order to disband the troops came at a critical time. In early November, Johnston believed that Buell and Thomas were combining for a strike at Bowling Green. Zollicoffer had already reported that the concentration on the eastern front was shifting westward as if to confront Buckner. Disturbed, Johnston even spoke of abandoning Bowling Green and retiring to Nashville. Johnston wanted the unarmed troops in the camps at Red Sulphur Springs, Cheatham, and Trousdale to be available if conditions became grave. He hoped that if the Federals broke through at Bowling Green, these poorly armed men could temporarily stem the tide. Until the situation appeared calm again, Johnston suspended Benjamin's order.

Richmond unknowingly went further to hamper Johnston's efforts. Orders were issued that any Confederate arms sent to Tennessee must be given to those regiments which had volunteered for the duration of the War. Only after these men had been supplied could the twelve-month volunteers be armed. This restriction placed Johnston in a dilemma.
Polk, for example, had at least eight unarmed, twelve-month regiments, but no regiments which had enlisted for the War. In the autumn of 1861, almost all the troops raised in Tennessee were twelve-month volunteers. The only alternative was to secure private arms for these troops. Under the terms of the earlier order, however, these regiments must be disbanded even before private arms could be found. Many of the reinforcements which Johnston had laboriously assembled had to be sent home in the fall of 1861.\(^\text{18}\)

Zollicoffer became the victim of this lack of communication between Johnston and Richmond. While waiting at Knoxville for his guns to be repaired, Zollicoffer was ordered on December 12 to move for Mill Springs. Carroll protested that if he went, he could only take 300 armed men. Benjamin curtly replied that if Carroll's weapons did not arrive by January 10, unarmed companies and regiments would be disbanded. W. C. Whitthorne entered the dispute and said that if Benjamin really understood conditions in Tennessee, he would give Carroll time to procure private arms. Benjamin relented and cancelled the January 10 deadline order, but the interruption caused some delay in Carroll's efforts.\(^\text{19}\)

Carroll again encountered misfortune, and Zollicoffer's hopes for reinforcement were dashed. By January 1, two
regiments had been armed, and a third was expected to be armed in thirty days. On January 8, Johnston, unaware of Zollicoffer's predicament, ordered Carroll to send to Bowling Green all the armed men except one regiment. The result was that when Carroll reinforced Zollicoffer, he could only bring a solitary regiment and a battery. Johnston's action was indicative of the total lack of communication between Zollicoffer and his commander. There was no coordinated action, though Zollicoffer had urged it. Johnston made only one effort to support his lieutenant during the entire fall and winter of 1861-1862. In October, two regiments were sent to reconnoiter on the Cumberland Plateau, but were given no instructions to combine action with Zollicoffer. During the fall and winter, Johnston knew almost nothing of what was going on along the eastern front. He did not even know that Zollicoffer planned to cross the Cumberland at Mill Springs. When he learned of the move, he did not inform Zollicoffer whether he approved or disapproved. 20

By the end of December, Zollicoffer's offensive plans, hampered by the arms situation, Richmond's interference, and Johnston's lack of communication, had completely collapsed. The expected reserves and supplies had not arrived. Had Zollicoffer been able to move out of his entrenchments in early December, he still might have been able to strike
Thomas in detail, for information then indicated both generals had five regiments in the field. The coup de grace to this last hope of success was applied by Jefferson Davis. Unaware of Zollicoffer's plan, Davis ordered George Crittenden to take command of the East Tennessee district. Davis had grandiose visions of Crittenden's leading a column of ten regiments north from Cumberland Gap to redeem Kentucky. The only problem was that there were not ten armed regiments in the eastern district, and those that were armed were a hundred miles west of Cumberland Gap poised for another offensive. Crittenden was equally ignorant of the situation. In late November, when he arrived in East Tennessee, he did not know the extent of his district or what forces he was to command. He did know that there were ten regiments in East Tennessee. Confused, he went to Richmond to discuss the matter with Davis once more.

Weeks of delay followed. On December 15, Zollicoffer informed Crittenden that Thomas' force had been increased to ten regiments. Zollicoffer's hopes faded. Instead of rushing every available man to Mill Springs, Crittenden ordered Zollicoffer back across the Cumberland, and dallied in Knoxville for two more weeks. Meanwhile, Zollicoffer could only remain in his breastworks at Beech Grove on the north bank, for to recross the river was impossible. The
waters were almost at flood level, and the Confederates only had two small rafts which they could use.  

By January 1, Zollicoffer's chances of striking at Thomas with a hope of success had disappeared. Thomas moved out of Lebanon, Kentucky, on January 1 to unite with Albion Schoepf at Somerset and drive Zollicoffer into the Cumberland River. As long as Zollicoffer remained in his fairly strong works on the north bank of the Cumberland, he would probably have a numerical superiority should Thomas attack. Reports indicated that Thomas did not have over 10,000 men, while Zollicoffer had 6,500 men behind fortifications.

Even this hope of success was dashed when Crittenden arrived at Mill Springs on January 2. Crittenden was opposed to the idea of standing on the defensive. Instead, on January 18, he called a council of war and maintained that Thomas should be attacked before he united with Schoepf. The two Federal commanders were separated by the swollen waters of Fishing Creek, and Crittenden believed that the still rising waters would keep Thomas and Schoepf isolated from each other. Such an offensive move, however, would be unwise, and there is some evidence that both Zollicoffer and one of his regimental commanders, D. H. Cummings, opposed the plan. Crittenden had been at Mill Springs only about two weeks, and did not understand the weaknesses of
Zollicoffer's division. The men had confidence in Zollicoffer, while Crittenden was unknown to the army. Confidence was needed at Mill Springs, for the men were inadequately trained and badly armed. One of Zollicoffer's brigades had not been drilled once. Also, even the best armed regiments had flintlock muskets that always performed badly in rainy weather. Despite these weaknesses, Crittenden ordered the advance. 22

At midnight on the eighteenth, the troops were routed from their winter huts and formed in a column on the road to Somerset. For six hours in the dark and cold night, they trudged the muddy road in a driving rain. By six o'clock on the following morning, as the skirmish line struck Thomas' pickets just south of the Mill Springs-Kinney's Ferry Road junction, the rain came in torrents. An eerie fight commenced amidst the rain, fog, and smoke which hung over Fishing Creek. Zollicoffer rode forward to reconnoiter, and was killed when he mistook the Fourth Kentucky Union Cavalry for Confederates.

When the news of Zollicoffer's death rached the troops, the left flank became demoralized and fell back. Carroll's brigade on the right flank was unable to stem the retreat, for Thomas had swung around to strike the crumbling Rebel left wing a hammer blow. As Thomas drove in the left, the Confederate line collapsed. The flintlock
muskets with which most of Crittenden's force were armed would not fire in the pelting rain, and the ill-disciplined force panicked. Six hours after the battle had started, Crittenden's battered regiments were streaming back into the Beech Grove breastworks. There could be no defense. Thomas, who planned to renew the attack at daylight, moved forward to encircle the fortifications. Crittenden believed that no stand could be made north of the river. Under the cover of night, the Confederates abandoned artillery, mules, blankets, and tents, and slipped across the Cumberland on a small steamboat which Crittenden had managed to commandeer.

On the morning of January 18, 1862, the battered column began the dismal eighty-mile trek southwest along the Cumberland River to Gainesborough, Tennessee, where they could receive supplies from Nashville. Crittenden's loss on the field was only 500, but his army was destroyed. Not only were his supplies and artillery captured, but, once on the north bank, the army straggled in all directions. As an effective force, the army was now totally useless. Weeks of rebuilding would be needed before the demoralized regiments could again take the field.

More than an army had been lost. In the Tory counties of East Tennessee and Kentucky, where strength and prestige meant everything, Confederate prestige had been lost. Johnston's right flank had all but disappeared. The only
remaining organized force in East Tennessee was at Cumberland Gap. A path was now open for a Federal advance into Tennessee through the gap between Bowling Green and the Cumberland Gap force. New encouragement had been given to Yankee armies in the West, for this was their first real victory since before the Bull Run disaster. In contrast, Johnston and the Army of Tennessee had suffered their first defeat, even before the main Federal winter offensive had begun. The West had lost its first general, who was potentially an able commander.

When the firing died down in the murky drizzle around Fishing Creek, Johnston did not know any of this. The commander of the Second Department, busy with details at Bowling Green, first learned that his eastern district's defenses had collapsed when he read the news in a Louisville newspaper. 24
Notes

1. Of Zollicoffer, Horn writes, "as a commanding officer he was in a role for which he was unfitted. He was simply not a soldier- by training or by instinct." Horn, Army of Tennessee, 50.


4. R. R. Hancock, Hancock's Diary: or, A History of the Second Tennessee Cavalry (Nashville, 1887), 28-51; Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 14-5; James Rains to wife, Oct. 3, 1861, Rains Papers, Tenn.

5. Even before Buell, the exponent of an East Tennessee offensive, assumed command in Kentucky, George Thomas, commanding in East Kentucky, was planning such a move. An order came from Lincoln some time between September 25 and October 4, 1861, stating that on or about October 5, Lincoln wanted a move commenced to seize the East Tennessee railroad near Cumberland Gap. Thomas assumed command of an army at Camp Dick Robinson and proceeded to whip it into shape for the expedition. After Zollicoffer destroyed Thomas' Barboursville camp and drove his men back to London, Thomas revised his strategy. Thomas proposed to enter Tennessee via Somerset and thus take Zollicoffer on his left flank. Prior to Zollicoffer's shift, Thomas had already set up a supply depot at Lebanon; Schoepf was pulled out of London and put at Somerset. The East Tennessee brigade remained on the Wilderness Road facing Cumberland Gap. One part of Thomas' strategy went awry. He had furnished money to East Tennessee Unionists with the hope that a revolt in East Tennessee and resulting increases in pressure on Zollicoffer would force the Rebels out of Cumberland Gap. However, Sherman called Thomas back because he feared an advance by Buckner on Louisville. The retreat from before Cumberland Gap turned into a near panic and was known as the "Wildcat Stampede." Francis F. McKinney, Education in Violence: The Life of George H. Thomas and the History of the Army of the Cumberland (Detroit, 1961), 103-23. In November, Thomas had more than 17,000 troops within position in East Kentucky; this number excluded new regiments that were forming in Kentucky and at Cincinnati. See OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 349; Zollicoffer


7. Alex. Coffee to wife, Nov. 3, 9, 25, Dec. 1, 17, 1861, in Coffee Papers, UNC. On Nov. 3, Coffee recorded that the move "will be like a game of chess, one move & a counter move..." After passing across the Cumberland Plateau, Coffee wrote on Dec. 1 that the Cumberland Basin was "a beautiful undulating country, sometimes highly cultivated & excellent farms...."; Ms. transcript of testimony of A. M. McCook at Buell Hearing, Buell Papers; Enoch Mitchell (ed.), "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon of the Army of Tennessee to his Wife," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, V (March 1946), 60-66. Of the trip to Mill Springs, one soldier recorded, "We encountered many hardships on the way; among other things suffered for provisions." William T. Alderson (ed.) "Civil War Diary of Captain James Litton Cooper, September 30, 1861, to January, 1865," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XV (June 1956), 144.

8. W. B. Wood to Mackall, Nov. 5, 1861, Zollicoffer to Mackall, Nov. 6, 7, 1861, in NA, West. Dept. T.R., 1861; Alex. Coffee recorded from near Wartburg, Tenn., that "The people hereabouts are nearly all against us." Coffee to wife, Nov. 20, 1861, Coffee Papers, UNC. See also Coffee to wife, Nov. 9, 1861, ibid.; Buell to Halleck, Oct. 17, 1861, Buell Papers, Rice; T. C. Hindman to Capt. Ed. Pickett, Jan. 17, 1862, NA, West. Dept. T.R., 1862; Testimony of A. M. McCook, OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 1, p. 110. McCook testified that it was impossible for an army to subsist atop the Cumberland Plateau.


17. Whitthorne to Benjamin, Jan. 8, 1862; Johnston to Harris, Nov. 5, 1861, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.

18. Johnston to Harris, Sept. 23, Nov. 2, 5, 16, 1861, Johnston to J. W. Head, Nov. 6, 1861, Johnston to Benjamin,


22. On Jan. 17, Thomas reached Logan's Cross Roads, ten miles north of Zollicoffer's entrenched camp and about ten miles west of Somerset. He halted to give his four straggling rear regiments time to catch up, and to instruct Schoepf in the details of the attack. Thomas resolved to stand on the defensive. He also ordered Schoepf to send him three of Schoepf's regiments which, contrary to Rebel hopes, were able to get across Fishing Creek. When the battle was fought, Thomas had three brigades on the field, with a total of ten regiments of infantry, one cavalry, and three artillery batteries. Schoepf joined Thomas on the evening of the battle after the fighting had ceased and brought with him three additional regiments. On the field, Thomas and Crittenden each had about 4,000 troops. See R. M. Kelley, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," Battles and Leaders, I, 387; McKinney, Thomas, 124-7; Walker, "Holding the Tennessee Line," 248. Crittenden was described as "a small man, genial and courteous, a trained soldier, plain in dress and unostentatious in manner...." Mosgrove, Kentucky Cavaliers in Dixie, 87. It must be remembered that this laudatory description was given by a Kentuckian of another Kentuckian. Crittenden was the son of United States Senator John J. Crittenden and the brother of Union General Thomas Crittenden.
Not all were high in their praise of Crittenden, especially after the battle. He was accused of being drunk, of being in sympathy with the North, and of being willing to surrender the army if the opportunity arose; Hancock, Second Tennessee Cavalry, 126. There is some evidence that Zollicoffer protested against the advance out of the entrenchments. Rumors in the Rebel camp on the morning after the defeat reported that Zollicoffer and one of his regimental commanders, D. H. Cummings, opposed the advance and attack. Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 20. Zollicoffer had trouble disciplining his officers as well as his men. One soldier reported, "He is greatly harassed to get even officers to interest themselves to take hold & do anything to push matters along." Alex. Coffee to wife, Dec. 7, 1861, Coffee Papers, UNC; Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 26.

23. The weakness in firepower played a considerable part in the defeat. One soldier described the arms situation on the field: "the rain was descending in torrents and our flintlock muskets were in a bad condition; not one in three would fire....did the best we could with our old flintlocks. Mine went off once in the action and although I wiped the 'pan' and primed a dozen times it would do no more." Alderson, "Civil War Diary of Captain James Litton Cooper," 146. Not one in five of the flintlock muskets with which the Twentieth Tennessee was armed would fire in the rain. Murray, Twentieth Tennessee, 201. A soldier in the Nineteenth Tennessee wrote, "Many of the men had the old flintlock guns which were, in this rain, utterly useless. The writer saw two or three of the boys break their guns over the fence, after several attempts to fire them." Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 22. The Seventeenth Tennessee, one of Carroll's regiments, suffered the same misfortune. One participant observed, "the men were still armed with the old flint-lock muskets. The worthlessness of the guns and the condition of the ammunition made the firing a farce. The shots were observed to fall to the ground far short of the enemy." A. S. Marks, "Seventeenth Tennessee Infantry," in John Lindsley, Military Annals of Tennessee, 350. Carroll complained that part of the reason for the repulse were the "old flint-lock muskets and country rifles, nearly half of which would not fire at all. During the engagement I saw numbers of the men walking deliberately away from the field of action for no other reason than that their guns were wholly useless." OR, I, 7, p. 144. Bennett Young recorded that, "Almost all of the Confederate troops were armed with flintlock muskets; some had ordinary percussion squirrel rifles and a few double-barrel shotguns... Owing to the dampness and rain the flintlock guns were fired
with great difficulty, and this disheartened in the very opening of the action the Confederate troops. At one time during the battle the 20th Tennessee retired in perfect order to pick their flints to get their guns to fire at all." Bennett Young, "Zollicoffer's Oak," Southern Historical Society Papers, XXXI (1903), 166, 168. The lack of drill and discipline was also a large factor in the breaking of the Rebel line. Young described them as, "raw and untried troops...." ibid., p. 168. Carroll reported his troops had only been assigned to him a day or two before the battle, and "were deficient in drill and discipline, having previous to that time had little opportunity of becoming proficient in these particulars." OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 114. Crittenden reported that, "On the field and during the retreat to camp some of the regiments became confused and broken and great disorder prevailed. This was owing, in some measure, to a want of proper drill and discipline, of which the army had been much deprived by reason of the nature of its constant service and of the country in which it had encamped." ibid., p. 108. See also, ibid 107; Worsham, Nineteenth Tennessee, 23.

PART IV

THE METAL BREAKS: THE DECLINE OF THE JOHNSTON INFLUENCE, WINTER, 1861-1862
The period of testing for the metal of the Army of Tennessee came in February of 1862, when the Federal army in West Kentucky struck at the land between the rivers, the weakest link forged in the defensive chain. For a period of three weeks in February, the command structure of Johnston's army broke down and showed the weakness of Johnston's tempering influence. Many of the conflicting reports and the confusion surrounding the fall of Forts Donelson and Henry are more intelligible if they are studied as an aspect of this total breakdown of command structure. The absence of leadership and neglect of responsibility that characterized this collapse were evident in four individual circumstances during the crucial weeks of February when the Yankee army began its offensive drive on Henry and Donelson.

The first failure of command occurred on the part of Leonidas Polk in late autumn and early winter of 1861-1862. Through a series of events which were initiated in November, Polk became totally immobilized in his Columbus fortress to the extent that in February he would not send aid to his sub-commander at Fort Henry, although he knew that the Federals were assaulting the fort in full strength. Polk's complete absence of concern for the inland forts, even when they had begun to fall, can only be understood, though
hardly justified, by examining how he had become so immobilized at Columbus.

In November, the process began with the insignificant battle of Belmont, Missouri. U. S. Grant had been sent opposite Columbus in order to cover a Federal move being made on Jeff Thompson in southeast Missouri and in order to prevent Polk from reinforcing Thompson. Grant did not know that Polk planned no such reinforcement. On November 7, Grant attacked the Thirteenth Arkansas, but Pillow and Cheatham crossed the Mississippi with reinforcements and drove Grant back to his transports. Although the battle was little more than a heavy skirmish, it was important because of several factors that resulted. First, it badly frightened Polk, for he interpreted it as an attack on Columbus. From November until February, he expected the Federals to advance against Columbus from Paducah and Mayfield, Kentucky. As early as the evening after the battle at Belmont, Polk informed Johnston that he was expecting an attack.\footnote{1}

A second result of the victory at Belmont was that it fortified Gideon Pillow's belief in himself as a great strategist and tactician. Had Pillow been in a position where he could do no harm, his super-inflated ego would have mattered little. On November 11, however, he believed
that his chance for glory had come. At one of the 
Columbus river batteries, a large Dahlgren gun exploded 
while Polk was standing nearby. The explosion blew away 
the Bishop's breeches, and unhinged his mind for a month. 
This ludicrous, if sad, episode left Pillow in command 
of the First Division while Polk recuperated. Polk's 
accident came at an unfortunate time for Johnston, since 
he had recently ordered Pillow's division to Central 
Kentucky, where reserves were needed to strengthen Hardee's 
weak left flank at Hopkinsville. Pillow did not want to 
go, for the encampment at Columbus was comfortable and 
pleasant. And if he went, he would lose his opportunity 
to command in Polk's stead. For Pillow now saw his chance 
to undertake the offensive campaign which he had wanted 
to lead in the summer. Polk had frustrated Pillow's summer 
aspirations, but now that Pillow had the command, he hoped 
to concentrate the district's forces at Columbus and 
move on Cairo.²

Pillow hoped that Polk's injury would induce Johnston 
to cancel the transfer order. Johnston did consent to 
allow Pillow to remain at Columbus, but informed him that 
his division must still proceed to Hopkinsville. Pillow 
was not happy with this arrangement, for he wanted his 
own division for his invasion plan. To keep his division 
and also obtain additional troops, Pillow devised a clever
scheme. On November 13, he began issuing almost daily reports of an overwhelming enemy force gathering in Kentucky to invade Columbus. According to his inflated estimates, enemy strength gradually increased from a modest 25,000 to 100,000 men. Pillow also issued a series of reports on the poor state of defenses at Columbus, and claimed his present force there would be unable to repel the attack. The reports were issued throughout the Second Department, and were so absurdly inflammatory that West Tennessee rang with his sensational alarms.³

Pillow's strategy was effective. Johnston believed his rumors, and not only cancelled his division's transfer, but also asked Harris to call out the State Militia to aid Pillow. Harris, also impressed by the reports, responded by calling out 30,000 men. No sooner had Johnston and Harris acted, than Pillow changed the tone of his reports. The enemy threat miraculously ceased, and Pillow now reported that the Columbus defenses were impregnable. In fact, Pillow suggested that conditions in West Tennessee had improved enough to allow him to undertake an offensive campaign.⁴

On December 4, Pillow openly presented his plan for the Cairo expedition to Polk. When Polk refused to allow the move, the old summer feud flared up again. The dispute which ensued was an important influence on Polk's
neglect of the inland river forts during late November and December. During late November, Polk spent most of his time arguing with Pillow over the proposed campaign. Polk maintained his force was too weak for an offensive and that the Columbus works were not strong enough to be left behind. To back up his argument, Polk secured written statements from the division and brigade commanders at Columbus. These men—among them B. F. Cheatham, John McCown, and S. F. Marks—agreed that Columbus was a weak position and that the army was not strong enough for an offensive.5

By the end of November, the dispute had ended, but its repercussions further tied Polk to the Columbus position. The arguments his line officers had presented, especially their reports of Halleck's strength at Cairo and Paducah, did more than support Polk's opinion. The force of their arguments convinced Polk that Columbus was in even greater danger than he thought. Thus, in December, he refused to send any reinforcements to the inland forts, and became completely absorbed in preparing Columbus against attack. He was positive that 50,000 men would move any day on Columbus from Cairo and Mayfield.6

In January, Polk's fear of attack on Columbus had become almost pathological. On his front, Polk had 21,000 men present for duty and had amassed 150 fixed and field
guns at Columbus. This force was by far the strongest on Johnston's line, and with it Polk might do several things. He could use it to glean valuable intelligence, or he could strike the flank of any Union force which threatened his weak right flank at Henry and Donelson. But instead of extending his line in order to protect the weak inland river forts, and instead of reinforcing Henry and Donelson, Polk announced his intentions of retiring into a state of siege at Columbus. The Bishop cited intelligence reports which indicated that Halleck planned to strike at Columbus, and on January 17, he announced, "I have resolved therefore to stand a siege...." Moreover, Polk asked Johnston and Davis for reinforcements. Even more obviously reflecting the Bishop's neglect of the inland river defenses was his declaration that any Federal force aimed at any point in his district other than Columbus would have to be the responsibility of "the War Department and the people of the States around us...." There was no excuse for Polk's neglect of his right flank, and there was no excuse for Johnston's continuous weakness in handling Polk. During January, Johnston made no effort to force Polk to be responsible for defending the eastern part of his district.

A rehearsal of Polk's attitude toward the inland rivers came in late January, when Halleck sent a
reconnaissance force up the Tennessee in order to test the defenses of Fort Henry. Polk knew that the defenses were in poor condition. In January, Lloyd Tilghman warned him that he feared high water would demolish Fort Henry, that his small force could not hold both sides of the Tennessee, and that the land forces at Henry and Donelson were inadequately armed. On the morning of January 17, three Federal vessels shelled Henry, while three transports landed a reconnaissance party on the west bank of the Tennessee. Tilghman put the force at about 5,500, and asked Polk and Johnston for assistance. Two days later, Polk sent a cavalry force to harass the rear of the Yankee column, which had already begun to withdraw to Paducah. Tilghman had obtained cavalry from Isham Harris and this force, eventually combined with the troops which Polk sent, followed the reconnaissance party almost as far as Paducah. Although Tilghman warned that the Yankee column was in a position to advance again on Fort Henry, a temporary calm descended on the inland rivers. With the exception of Tilghman, the Rebel high command considered the move a false alarm. 8

The real attack came suddenly, and Tilghman pleaded with Polk for assistance. On February 3, Tilghman warned Polk that the enemy was concentrating at Smithland, Kentucky, in preparation for another invasion. On the
following day, four gunboats suddenly appeared in the river and opened fire on Fort Henry. Tilghman reported that the smoke of other approaching boats was visible far down the Tennessee. Later that afternoon, five transports appeared downstream and landed troops on the east side of the river within three miles of Fort Henry. Tilghman drew in his troops from the west bank of the Tennessee, where they had been desperately trying to dig entrenchments at the unfinished Fort Heiman. On the fifth, Tilghman warned, "Whatever is done must be done at once." Polk informed Tilghman that he had ordered some cavalry to the Tennessee. Tilghman thanked the Bishop, but urgently insisted that he must have infantry.  

Polk sent no help, and after a courageous defense by Tilghman, Fort Henry fell on February 6. The Kentuckian in charge of the Fort Henry defenses did not have a chance to hold the fort. The help in building Fort Heiman which was promised by multiple sources never came, and the fort remained unfinished. Tilghman's most outstanding regiment, the Tenth Tennessee, was put into the battle line with Tower of London muskets that were used by Andrew Jackson's militia in 1812. Tilghman had warned Johnston and Polk that these were his only weapons. Captain Jesse Taylor's September warnings of the danger resulting from the winter rains proved to be correct. On the day that the Federals
began to bombard the fort, the flag pole on the parade grounds stood in two feet of river water, one third of the fortifications were inundated, and the waters were lapping into the lower river batteries. Tilghman had also warned of the inadequate range of the fort's guns. In late January, Tilghman reported to Johnston that he had only one gun at the fort which was equal in range to that of the Federal guns which had fired on the fort in the reconnaissance attack. This single ten-inch gun had no ammunition. Tilghman pleaded for ammunition and for two additional ten-inchers.

The auxiliary firepower was never sent and on February 5, the sixty-five naval guns of the Union fleet easily disabled eight of Tilghman's twelve guns. There was no possibility of sending his infantry to meet the Yankee force which was moving down the east bank of the Tennessee to encircle Henry. Tilghman knew his 2,600 poorly armed troops were no match for the 16,000 Federals reported to be moving on Henry. On February 5, Tilghman ordered his troops to retreat, while he remained with eighty men to man the guns and to gain enough time for his regiments to get to Donelson. Later in the day, the white flag was raised over Fort Henry, and Federal officers rowed straight through the sallyport into the fort. The Tennessee River was now open to the interior of Alabama.
The breakdown of command within Polk's district was the most direct cause of the fall of the Tennessee River defenses. Polk had all but given up his responsibility for the inland forts. On February 5, two days after Tilghman's warning, Polk informed Johnston that he could only send Tilghman cavalry and that although Tilghman wanted other reinforcements, "I have none at my command besides the force at this post...." Polk suggested that Johnston reinforce Tilghman. The only gesture which Polk made to supply infantry was in ordering two regiments at Corinth, Mississippi, to move to Henry. These regiments did not begin to move before Fort Henry surrendered. Polk informed Johnston that these regiments were "two of the best regts. of infantry...", but actually, when he ordered them forward, Polk did not even know if they were in a condition to move.

This failure by Polk to defend his own district was only an indication of a command failure at a higher level. Johnston was well aware of the weak conditions at Henry, as well as at Donelson. Johnston was sent a copy of almost every warning which Tilghman sent Polk after the February advance began. Johnston realized that Tilghman's small force had inadequate weapons, that water was rising into the fort, and that Tilghman's mounted guns provided ineffective firepower. Johnston was also aware that Tilghman
had insufficient ammunition for the one ten-inch gun at the fort, and that additional ten-inch guns were needed. When the nine transports began unloading to infest Henry, Johnston knew exactly when the move commenced, and knew the comparative strength of Tilghman and the enemy. Johnston also realized that Polk planned to send Tilghman no infantry from Columbus. The responsibility for Fort Henry was therefore also a command failure on Johnston's part. Johnston's habit of preoccupation with a single object had blinded him to his departmental responsibilities. He assumed that, since the inland forts were in Polk's district, Polk would defend them. His weakness in handling subordinates resulted in Johnston's not ordering Polk to reinforce Tilghman, just as Johnston had given in to Polk's inconceivable announcement of siege preparations in January. Yet Johnston's habit of completely trusting a subordinate caused him to expect confidently that Polk would defend his district during the crisis on the Tennessee.11

The second and more serious command breakdown occurred at Johnston's Bowling Green headquarters. This collapse goes far in explaining Johnston's seeming disinterest in Fort Henry. The confusion that ensued at Bowling Green when the Federal army moved from Fort Henry to Fort Donelson, and the turmoil of command problems which
characterized the defense of Fort Donelson were both products of the collapse of Johnston's leadership.

The reason behind Johnston's apparent disinterest in Fort Henry marked the beginning of this collapse. In January and February of 1862, Johnston became further entrenched in conclusions which he had formulated in the autumn of 1861. He completely divided the expected Federal advance into compartments. He considered Buell to be the enemy of Middle Tennessee, and Halleck's force to be the threat to Polk at Columbus. By February, Johnston believed that Buell would advance on Nashville via Bowling Green and South Carrollton, Kentucky. He was convinced that Halleck would advance directly on Columbus. Another force would move up the Tennessee River on Polk's right and would turn west toward Columbus. When Grant moved on Fort Henry in early February, Johnston thence expected him to turn west and strike Polk on the flank. There is no evidence that, before Grant moved into the lines around Donelson, Johnston considered that Grant might advance east to Donelson instead of west to Columbus. Instead, Johnston waited at Bowling Green and watched for Buell to advance on Middle Tennessee. 12

Johnston expected Buell to move against him from two bases—the main base in the Nolin-Munfordville area and the South Carrollton base on Green River. The Nolin
force was encamped on the Louisville-Bowling Green pike, and threatened Bowling Green. The South Carrollton force had camped on the pike which led south through Greenville and Hopkinsville to the north bank of the Cumberland opposite Fort Donelson. Johnston had been observing the Nolin force since October. In January, the other force moved up the Green River to South Carrollton, and Johnston considered this new force a threat to the weak flank west of Bowling Green. Johnston shifted three brigades commanded by Brigadier-General John Floyd, who had recently arrived from western Virginia, to bolster the left flank at Russellville, Kentucky. Johnston did not order this move, as some historians would later argue, because he expected a combined move up the Tennessee and the Cumberland and wanted to put troops in position to reinforce Donelson. On the contrary, Johnston expected the Cumberland threat to come from the force at South Carrollton and prepared to oppose this move with troops commanded by General Charles Clark at Hopkinsville, thirty-five miles northeast of Fort Donelson, and with Floyd's brigades at Russellville, sixty miles northeast of the fort.  

But in early February, a fog of intelligence as well as a winter fog settled over the Green River. For two precious weeks, Johnston lost trace of Buell's army. Since November, Johnston had always had trouble in
receiving news of Buell's movements. Geography, Union sentiment, illness, weather, overeager reconnaissance commanders— all had masked Buell's position. In November and December, Buell was reported to be at multiple sites—Greensburg, Columbia, Campbellsville, Rochester— but always at Nolin. In late January, even the intelligence from the Nolin area was sparse. T. C. Hindman, commanding the main reconnaissance outpost at Bell's Station, reported that it was becoming harder to observe Buell's movements. Numerous reports of a Federal advance came from widely divergent areas, from South Carrollton in Western Kentucky to Burkesville in East Kentucky. A Federal column was reported to be at Burkesville, and to be perhaps advancing into Tennessee in order to flank Johnston on the right. But Johnston could not determine if the reports were reliable. Other Federal troops were reported to be at Campbellsville and at Greensburg preparing to drive into Tennessee on the heels of Crittenden's force that had just fallen back. 14

The lack of dependable information on the Nolin and South Carrollton fronts became critical by early February. Reports in January had indicated that Buell was rebuilding the railroad bridge across Green River at Munfordville, and had already sent advance units across. In the last week of January, reconnaissance indicated the Munfordville
troops were pulling back to Louisville. Scouts reported that trains could be heard arriving and leaving Munfordville at short intervals. By February 1, however, intelligence reported that the Munfordville force was not leaving, but rather that it was increasing. New encampments were observed, and the old camps were reported to have floored tents and chimneys, as if they were to remain there for the winter.

On the left, the Federal activity at South Carrollton also puzzled Johnston and drew his attention. In late January, Bedford Forrest swung north on a scout and reported the enemy was repairing the Rochester locks in preparation for moving out of South Carrollton. Then, a rumor came which indicated that the force had already left South Carrollton in order to move on Hopkinsville and Russellville. Scarcely had this rumor been determined false when another report indicated that the South Carrollton force was not moving south but was retreating down Green River to Calhoun. At the same time, another forward movement from Munfordville was reported to be under way. Confused, Johnston called for more reconnaissance in order to determine Buell's exact location. It was clear that in the first week of February, Johnston had lost his opponent.¹⁵

Not only had Johnston lost sight of Buell, he had also
lost track of the Union force which moved on Fort Henry. Between February 5 and February 7, a communications "blackout" occurred in the land between the rivers. On February 5, telegrams informed Johnston that heavy firing was being heard from Fort Henry and that transports were on the Tennessee River. On the same day, the Clarksville operator excitedly reported that heavy firing was being heard from Fort Donelson and that the Clarksville-Donelson telegraph was out of order. Also on the same day, other news reported that the Federals were pouring from transports into the land between Henry and Donelson. The Cumberland City operator repeatedly cut into the wire to report more heavy firing at Donelson. The Danville operator, after a hasty conversation with boatsmen from downriver, reported that a white flag was flying over Fort Henry. Finally, on the night of the sixth and the morning of the seventh, messages were received from Fort Donelson which severely jolted the Department commander. The force which had overwhelmed Fort Henry was not turning toward Polk. Instead, it had turned to Fort Donelson, where an attack was expected as early as the eighth.\(^{16}\)

Johnston had not expected this move from Fort Henry to Fort Donelson. Reports still indicated that Buell was on the Green River line, and Johnston could not
comprehend that another force besides that of Buell was attacking on the Cumberland River. Already confused as to Buell's location on Green River, Johnston was staggered by the realization that he had miscalculated the Federal advance. There was still more confusion, for Johnston could not even find his own army. After the first shock of the report that Donelson was expecting an attack, Johnston had blindly thrown troops into the area around Clarksville. Still not wanting to believe that Donelson was threatened, Johnston thought that the real advance would be against Clarksville. Pillow, who had resigned and then had rejoined the army at Bowling Green, was sent to Clarksville to gather all available forces. Floyd, with his own and Buckner's troops, was ordered south to join Pillow. In his state of anxiety, Johnston could not locate the army he had hastily sent to the Cumberland area. He did not know where Floyd and Buckner were, or what their strength was. Johnston also did not know how many troops were already at Clarksville, and how many were at Donelson. Pillow's plans, strength, and needs at Clarksville were also completely unknown to Johnston. 17

Totally confused, Johnston reached two decisions that were to have a far-reaching influence on the fate of Fort Donelson. First, he was still unwilling to believe
the infantry force at Henry was moving to attack Donelson, and thus he developed a curious mental fog about the danger of a land attack on Donelson. He became convinced that the main threat to the fort was the Federal gunboats reported to be steaming up the Cumberland, and the defense of Donelson became a question of whether the fort could hold out against the gunboats. At first, he did not believe the Yankee fleet could be stopped and issued orders for Hardee to fall back to Nashville. Johnston's strange belief that Donelson would be safe if the gunboats could be stopped perhaps explains why he ordered troops into Donelson even after he stated on February 7 that the fort was not long tenable. To Johnston, "untenable" meant not being able to withstand gunboats. There is no evidence that during this critical period he ever grasped that the real danger to Donelson might be from the land side. For example, on February 7, he ordered Pillow to take his force to Donelson, hold the fort as long as possible, and then retreat to Nashville. Johnston seemed completely unaware of the danger that the fort might be cut off on the land side. Blinded to a fact that he did not want to accept, he saw only one side of the danger at Donelson-- the river. 18

Also, confused by Buell's movements, startled by the
sudden move on Donelson, and unable to locate his own troops, Johnston tried to relieve himself of the responsibility of defending the Cumberland River area. On February 8, he gave up the command in the area to John Floyd. Johnston told Floyd to make his own plans for defense, and added, "I cannot give you specific instructions and place under your command the entire force." Again acting as if he were a district commander, Johnston then turned to busy himself with preparations for evacuating Bowling Green. This decision to give Floyd the responsibility indicated that the command structure of the Army was breaking down at the departmental level. Unable to rise above acting like a district commander, Johnston was beginning to lose command of the Army of Tennessee. 19

The Federal troops advancing on Fort Donelson did not get into position before the fort until the morning of February 13, seven days after Fort Henry was surrendered. During these crucial days, a third breakdown of command responsibility occurred, this one at the Clarksville command post. When Johnston gave up the command to Floyd, the problem of determining where to defend against the Federals fell to Gideon Pillow and John Floyd. Johnston could not have made a worse choice in commanders. These two men, one of whom had retired from the army to sulk and
then had returned with the hope of retrieving glory, and the other, a new, untried general in the Second Department, were given responsibility for the fate of Middle Tennessee. The command confusion and delay in their preparations spoiled an excellent chance of striking the Federals while they were toiling on the muddy, narrow road between Henry and Donelson. This country was well suited for an ambush, because it was dotted with flooded creeks, ravines, and underbrush. Pillow, who was at Clarksville before Floyd arrived there, twice advocated concentrating Floyd and Buckner's troops and striking the Yankees on the flank as they marched between the forts. Forrest, who came back to Tennessee with Floyd and Buckner, had operated in the land between the rivers before being sent to Kentucky and knew the terrain well. The time seemed ripe for an ambush.

Such a move never was attempted. It was prevented by a morass of command confusion and personal ambition that entered the vacuum created by Johnston's passing of the command to Floyd. When Pillow wanted to make the move, he did not have enough troops, nor the cooperation needed. Charles Clark's brigade, ordered to Clarksville from Hopkinsville, was delayed by poor road conditions and Clark's own slowness. When Clark did reach Clarksville, a quarrel began over whether Pillow outranked Clark.
Clark declined to turn over the command of the brigade to Pillow. Valuable time was lost before Johnston finally intervened to order Pillow to take command of Clark's brigade. 21

When Pillow did have the necessary troops available, another confusion in command provided a further delay. For some reason, Floyd was slow to realize the meaning of Johnston's assigning him on February 8 to command the Cumberland area. Not until February 11, when Johnston repeated and clarified the order, did Floyd take command at Clarksville. In that crucial three-day interval, an event occurred which changed Pillow's opinion about the proposed offensive. Although he knew nothing of the situation at Donelson, on February 9, Johnston ordered Pillow to take Buckner and Clark's troops, both at Clarksville, and proceed to Donelson. While at Clarksville, Pillow knew that the troops already there were deficient in weapons, and that only one seventh of the friction primers in his troops' possession were considered effective. He also was aware that Donelson was low on ammunition, and that since the fort had no storehouse, there was not one day's rations in the fort. All supplies, including food and ammunition, were kept at the little town of Dover near the fort. Also, with Floyd's troops coming up, Pillow realized that the combined force would now be
strong enough to make the flank attack that Pillow had suggested. 22

Though he knew Donelson was a weak position, and despite the fact that he had earlier pressed for a flank attack, Pillow did not protest Johnston's order. The move to Donelson would provide another opportunity for him to hold an independent command. To remain at Clarksville would only mean serving under Floyd. His excellent plan for a flank move was forgotten. Instead, Pillow left immediately for Donelson, after issuing his battle cry: "Liberty or Death." When Pillow surveyed the works, he realized the full extent of the fort's weakness. Donelson had not been designed for land defense, but was intended for field support of the water batteries. The fort was on a rise of high ground about 1,400 yards northwest of the village of Dover. North of the fort, Hickman's Creek, filled with backwater, formed an impassable barrier. South of the fort, swollen Indian Creek intersected the Confederate line and isolated the left flank. South of Indian Creek and just above Dover, a third stream filled with backwater, Lick Creek, flowed into the Cumberland. To supplement the weak defenses on the land side, Gilmer in January had begun work on a line of rifle pits extending from Hickman's Creek along a series of ridges west of the fort, and curving
back to the river above Dover, a total distance of three miles. Less than a third of these rifle pits had been constructed when Pillow arrived. Even if they had been finished, they would not have strengthened the fort. A garrison might hold the bastioned parapet which comprised the primary work, but an army would be required to man the entire line of rifle pits. Pillow saw these weaknesses, and confided to Floyd that the works were not only incomplete, but were badly planned. 23

In contrast to his private views, most of the reports which Pillow sent were full of exaggerated assurances that Donelson could be held. He told Floyd that he felt confident of holding the fort against an infantry assault, and that he could resist the gunboats. Johnston was informed that, if a little time were available, the batteries would be made bombproof, and that Pillow hoped to resist both land and naval attacks. On February 12, Pillow sent a grossly misleading dispatch to Johnston, boasting that the fort could be held with the men Pillow already had at Donelson. Pillow also informed Johnston that there was not any danger of the enemy's outflanking Donelson, since such a move would make the Union flank vulnerable to attack. 24

These misleading statements about Donelson's strength were the product of command confusion and personal ambition. When Floyd arrived at Clarksville, Pillow found
that his independent command status at Donelson was threatened. Floyd visited Donelson and on February 10, agreed with Pillow that the entire Rebel force in the area should be concentrated at Donelson. During the following two days, after he had returned to Clarksville, Floyd changed his mind. He decided that the weak condition of the fort and the nature of the terrain south of the fort made Donelson a trap. The line of communications from Donelson to Nashville was via the Wynn's Ferry Road. This road was intersected by the high backwaters of Indian and Lick Creeks, already swollen by the February rains. Instead, Floyd revived Pillow's old idea. Keep a token force at Donelson to hold the fort, concentrate the main army at Cumberland City, and strike the Federal column on the flank as it moved to Donelson.

For an instant, the prospects of success on the Cumberland seemed bright. Then the command structure broke down, and the opportunity for the flank move slipped from Floyd's grasp. Pillow no longer had any enthusiasm for his own idea. He had only suggested the flank move when, as commander at Clarksville, he would have led the expedition. He had no interest in a Floyd-led attack. Floyd intended for Pillow to hold Donelson while Buckner's troops joined Floyd's at Cumberland City. Not only would
these dispositions rob Pillow of a chance for glory, but would take from him a part of his Donelson command. Unable to sacrifice his personal ambition for the army's good, Pillow refused to send Buckner's men to Floyd. The result was a bitter quarrel that raged during the crucial days when the Federals were approaching Donelson. Floyd, a weak individual given to indecision and lack of force in dealing with a subordinate, made no attempt to force Pillow to obey the order. Pillow took advantage of Floyd's weakness. While Floyd pondered what to do, Pillow bombarded Johnston with another batch of optimistic dispatches that promised a successful defense of Fort Donelson. To convince Johnston that Buckner's troops should be retained, Pillow assured him that Fort Donelson would be safe against a land attack provided Buckner's men remained with Pillow.

While Floyd hesitated, Pillow won the argument. Johnston knew nothing of conditions in the Donelson area, but was impressed by Pillow's boasts of his ability to hold Donelson. He ruled in favor of Pillow, and not only revoked Buckner's transfer order, but also ordered Floyd's troops into Donelson. Again, Floyd demonstrated his weakness of decision. Several hours before Johnston's order arrived, Floyd had already put his troops in motion toward Donelson. Pillow had convinced Floyd to concentrate
there against Floyd's better judgment. As his troops marched into Donelson in the early morning hours of the thirteenth, Floyd's heart was not in the move, for he had no confidence in the works at Donelson. His weakness of decision and Pillow's ambition had pressured him to move into a position which, only a few days earlier at Russellville, both Floyd and Buckner had agreed was a trap.  

25

On the morning of February 16, three days after Floyd arrived, the fort was surrendered to U. S. Grant. The underlying cause of the loss of Donelson was a command failure at district, departmental, and area commands. The immediate cause was a fourth breakdown of command which occurred at Fort Donelson between February 13 and 16.

The command structure at Donelson collapsed because in physical resources, morale, and leadership, the fort was completely unprepared to withstand an attack. In physical resources, the fort was extremely weak when Floyd arrived. The river batteries were not finished. The series of ridges a few thousand yards west of the fort presented Floyd with a dilemma. If the enemy seized them and planted artillery there, the Confederates in the river batteries and at the principal salient of the fort would be cut to pieces. The alternative was to complete the rifle pits already begun along the ridges to prevent
the Federals from seizing the position. Only a third of the pits had been dug when Floyd arrived, and to hold even that mile of entrenchments would spread the Donelson garrison thin.

Conditions inside the fort were no better. Ammunition and food were short. Blankets and tents were almost nonexistent. This shortage of cover was not noticed by the men until the morning Floyd arrived. Prior to February 13, Donelson had enjoyed unseasonably warm weather, but on the thirteenth, conditions changed drastically. By mid-afternoon, a warm drizzle had become a cold, sleet ing rain. That night an icy gale brought two inches of snow and the temperature plunged to ten degrees. The rifle pits, already filled with rain, became pools of ice. Further digging of entrenchments in the frozen ground was impossible. There were few shelters on the three-mile line, and the wet, half-frozen men huddled together during the miserable night.

The suffering of the night of February 13 provided the finishing touch to an atmosphere of defeatism which permeated the entire fort on the eve of the struggle for Donelson. Morale had been low for several days, and the fort was mentally unprepared to resist an assault. Floyd had no confidence in the position. Despite his telegrams to Johnston, Pillow admitted to Floyd privately that the
Fort was in a weak condition. Morale among the troops was low. The infantry which straggled in from Fort Henry was in a deplorable condition, having lost camp equipment, provisions, and many weapons. The Donelson camp was filled with lurid tales of the invincibility of the Yankee force which battered Fort Henry into submission. Ugly rumors swept through the Donelson trenches that Fort Henry had been surrendered needlessly, and some wondered if Donelson might not suffer a similar fate. Tilghman was reported to have hauled down the flag when the enemy vessels were a quarter of a mile away. Tempers flared as supporters of Tilghman, the Kentuckian, branded the rumors as lies. The argument spread into a bitter dispute between Kentucky troops who backed Tilghman and the Tennessee regiments. The quarrel had been brewing for some time, for feeling between the regiments from the two states ran high. 27

Yet a peculiar air of serenity was present among the high command on February 13 that indicated a serious weakness of leadership. The problem was that Floyd simply did not know what Johnston expected him to do at Donelson. Floyd, a newcomer in the Department, sensed his own lack of familiarity with conditions in the army, and his weakness of decision made him even more cautious. Also, Johnston's orders sending Floyd to Donelson contained no
instructions whatsoever. The result was that on February 13, Floyd did nothing and consequently, lost one of the greatest opportunities of the campaign. On February 13, the Confederate force at Donelson numbered about 15,000. Pillow told Floyd that morning that the Federals approaching Donelson had between 10,000 and 12,000 men. Except for a brief and unsuccessful foray against two Confederate batteries, the Federal land force remained inactive on the thirteenth. If Floyd thought the fort was a trap, the situation gave him the opportunity to get his army out of the fort. If he planned to stand and fight, the Federal inactivity and the numerical superiority of the Confederates provided a chance of success. Unable to make a decision, Floyd did nothing, and the Confederate infantry remained idle on this crucial day. 28

Floyd's inactivity on February 13 indicated something even more serious than the loss of opportunity. Like Johnston, Floyd and Pillow had become blind to the danger posed by the Federal land force. On the thirteenth, despite information that the Federals were moving into a semicircular position around Donelson that threatened to break communications with Nashville, Floyd made no effort to keep the communication lines open south of the fort. In fact, both Floyd and Pillow almost completely ignored land operations on the thirteenth. Like Johnston, they
were convinced that the threat to Donelson lay in the
gunboats on the Cumberland. This fascination with the
gunboat threat filled the vacuum created by the lack
of instructions from Johnston.

This peculiar blindness to land operations was
intensified by the success of Donelson's water batteries
on February 13. Isaac Newton Brown's warnings to Johnston
and Pillow of the invincibility of the gunboats proved
a sham. During the afternoon, a duel ensued between
the Confederate batteries and the gunboat Carondelet.
For two hours the batteries and the vessel's guns hammered
away at each other. After a 128-pound solid shot tore
into the gunboat's port casement and burst the steam lines,
the battle was all but over. Sporadic firing continued
until dusk, but it was evident that the land batteries
had gotten the better of the fight. Pillow and Floyd were
jubilant, and both repeatedly telegraphed Johnston their
assurances that Donelson could be held. Floyd boasted,
"we have maintained ourselves fully by land and water."29

On the morning of the fourteenth, command weakness
again wasted opportunity. Floyd had the chance to fight
while the odds were still fairly even, to open his com-
munication line, or to abandon the fort. The night before,
Floyd had received word that enemy reinforcements were
being sent over from the Tennessee River to turn his left flank and cut his communications with Nashville. By the morning of February 14, the Federals had gotten across the Wynn's Ferry road, Floyd's line of communications to the south. If Floyd were going to attack or retreat, the fourteenth appeared to be his last chance to do so with any certainty of success. Intelligence reported that fifteen Yankee transports carrying 20,000 reinforcements were in the Cumberland. If the transports were unloaded, Floyd estimated the total Union force would be 40,000.

Again Floyd did nothing. In the absence of instructions from Johnston and because of his interest in the gunboat attack on the fourteenth, the infantry remained idle. The least he could have done was to reopen the Wynn's Ferry road. On the morning of the fourteenth, a half-hearted attempt was made to open that route, but when Pillow curiously protested that it was too late in the day for the move to succeed, Floyd gave in and cancelled the operation. The morning wore into afternoon, and Floyd himself observed Union reinforcements arriving on the field. Then he turned his attention back to the river, after he had wasted another opportunity.

During the afternoon, a tremendous assault of five of the Federal gunboats on the river batteries kept Floyd's
attention away from the Federal buildup on land. This assault was so fierce and its outcome so surprisingly favorable that Floyd remained convinced the fort would be safe if it could withstand a river attack. Determined to reduce the fort, the Yankee fleet bombarded the river batteries with a deafening barrage. The firepower was so awesome that even Forrest, who never wavered in the face of the enemy, became excited and told an aide that the fort could not possibly withstand the barrage. Floyd excitedly telegraphed Johnston that the fort could not hold twenty minutes. But the fort did hold, and the plucky river batteries put four of the gunboats out of commission. Floyd was elated. With renewed confidence, he again sent Johnston assurance that the fort would hold.31

During the late afternoon and evening of the fourteenth, Floyd drastically altered his opinion of the Donelson situation. For the first time since he arrived there, he seemed to realize that the threat to Donelson was on the land side. During the afternoon, reports indicated that the Union buildup was increasing. Some reports even said the Federals were assembling 50,000 men. Scouts on the Confederate left flank near Lick Creek reported to Floyd that the hold on Wynn's Ferry road had been tightened by the arrival of reinforcements. After
two days of doing nothing, Floyd suddenly decided that the fort was a trap that must be evacuated. A telegram from Johnston received on the fourteenth provided some impetus for this decision. Johnston's dispatch, which indicated how little he knew of the situation at Donelson, ordered Floyd to march to Nashville if he could not hold the fort. Thus, on the evening of February 14, Floyd called a council of war and made his first positive decision since arriving at Donelson. The Confederates would strike the Union right flank early on the morning of the fifteenth and open the Wynn's Ferry road. When the road was open, Floyd's army would escape to Nashville.\footnote{32}

On the morning of the fifteenth, for the third consecutive day, Floyd exhibited his weakness as a commander. Briefly, the jaws of the Federal trap around Donelson were forced open. As the mists of dawn sifted over the icy backwaters of Indian Creek, the men of Bushrod Johnson's brigade rose up out of the gullies and creek bottoms and fell upon the Union right wing at the Wynn's Ferry road crossing. With Forrest screening the far left of Pillow's line and the capable Bushrod Johnson striking the crucial point, the Federal right began to buckle. After three hours of stiff fighting, a general attack along the Confederate left was launched by Pillow. Forrest's troopers crashed into the wavering Yankee line on the flank and rear
and the Union flank crumbled. One hour later, the Federal right wing rested at right angles to the left and center, and the Confederates scrambled into the abandoned positions. A lone Yankee battery remained to command the Wynn's Ferry road. About noon, Forrest again smashed into the Yankee position and the artillerists were sabered at their guns. The Yankee right wing was streaming back to the rear, and the road to Nashville was open.

At this critical moment, the Confederate command structure at Donelson collapsed. Commanding on the left, Pillow ordered Buckner, who was attacking the Federal center, to break off the attack and return to his trenches on the right. Buckner refused, stating that Floyd was in command of the operations. He then rode off to urge Floyd to continue the retreat. Floyd told Buckner to wait until he consulted Pillow. When Floyd found Pillow, he persuaded Floyd that Federal reinforcements were arriving on the field and that neither Pillow nor Buckner's men were able to continue the operation. Again Floyd's weakness of decision lost the Confederates an excellent opportunity. Without checking with Buckner on the conditions in his division, Floyd ordered him back into the trenches on the right flank. Reluctantly, Buckner ordered a return to the entrenchments, but before he could get back to his old position the Federal left wing counterattacked
and seized the vacant rifle pits on the ridge. Soon, Yankee batteries were in full command of the right flank of the Donelson line.\textsuperscript{34}

Floyd had made two errors in command on the fifteenth. One error was in listening to Pillow, who was always less sanguine in action than in talk. After the retreat had started, it was almost a necessity that it be carried to completion. This was demonstrated by the fate of the right flank which crumbled in Buckner's absence. Pillow later explained that, after a temporary repulse by the Yankee battery commanding Wynn's Ferry road, Buckner's troops were too demoralized to continue the fight. Actually, because of the icy ground and the slowness of the lead regimental commander, Buckner's line had scarcely advanced when the ferry road was opened and only two of his regiments had seen action. Even in Pillow's division, Brigadier General Bushrod Johnson, who commanded the main striking force, did not report heavy casualties in the morning operation. Although bold in words, Pillow lacked determination needed to command the lead escape column. When the road was first opened, Pillow seemed to believe the action was over. Elated at the victory his troops had won, Pillow sent a flowery telegram to Johnston boasting, "On the honor of a soldier, the day is ours." After sending this report, Pillow did nothing.\textsuperscript{35}
The failure of Floyd to make clear the details of the escape also explains Pillow's stopping the move. In the council of war held the night before, Floyd did not clarify what was to be done. Floyd and Buckner later claimed that the purpose of the move was to open the line of communications to Nashville as well as to retreat when that line was open. Pillow insisted that the only purpose agreed upon was to open the line, and that retreat was not discussed. Heiman, who was also present at the meeting, also stated that the objective was only to open the line. Major Jeremy Gilmer later said the plan was to secure a line of retreat and then either to retreat or continue the fight. Forrest reported that, although he understood that the ultimate intention was to retire if the way were opened, nothing was said about a retreat, no order was given to that effect, and no preparations were made among the troops.

Some regimental commanders, including Colonels John C. Brown and William Palmer, took an opposite viewpoint. They reported that their troops had been ordered to carry three days' rations as well as blankets with them. It appears that Floyd planned to retreat, for, on the fifteenth, he had sent to Clarksville and Nashville every available boat filled with the sick and wounded. Yet he failed to provide any system for evacuating the fort, such as the withdrawal of artillery, and did not make it clear to his
subordinates that he intended to retreat. Once Wynn's Ferry road was open, a lack of understanding as to what Floyd intended, doomed the expedition to failure. 36

The command breakdown at Donelson became complete during the night of the fifteenth and the early morning hours of the next day. Floyd, Buckner, and Pillow gathered at Floyd's headquarters at Dover Inn to discuss future plans. The lack of orders from Johnston, the exaggerated reports of the enemy's reinforcements, the two days' concentration on the gunboats without keeping open a communication route, the lack of a positive plan devised by Floyd—all these factors began to take effect. Thirteen transports were reported to have arrived on the fifteenth, and the Donelson high command was now convinced that the Yankee force at Donelson numbered more than 50,000. Tension mounted as Pillow and Buckner lashed out at each other for the morning's failure. All three agreed that the move which had failed that morning should be attempted immediately. Floyd's scouts, however, reported that the Wynn's Ferry road had been recaptured that evening by the Federals, and that campfires of the enemy could be seen flickering along the roadside. The only other escape route was a river road to Cumberland City, but the scouts reported that at the Lick Creek crossing, the road was under three feet of water and was impassable to infantry. 37
For the fourth consecutive day, Floyd failed to stand by his decision. When it was learned that the Wynn's Ferry road was apparently retaken, Buckner mentally went to pieces and advocated immediate surrender. He argued that his troops were worn by four days without sleep and a day of hard fighting. Actually, Buckner was the one who was exhausted, for when the surrender did come, his line officers and the troops would be shocked. There was not only fatigue, but a lack of morale among the high command.

A feeling of defeatism came over the entire group which was a result of the intense pressure of the past three days, the lack of information as to what Johnston wanted them to do, and the disillusionment that followed their realization that to repulse gunboats did not guarantee the fort's safety. Buckner won over Floyd, and Forrest was summoned. The cavalryman was shocked when he learned that surrender was being discussed, and protested that it was still possible to escape by the Wynn's Ferry road. To prove it, he sent two of his own scouts to reconnoiter. They reported that they saw no enemy, only fires burning by the side of the road. Forrest argued that these were the old fires that had been whipped into flames by the strong night winds.\(^{38}\)

Forrest's protests were to no avail, for the three
commanders had completely lost their nerve. Buckner continued to hammer away at the need to surrender. He argued that even if Forrest were correct, his troops had little ammunition and were physically exhausted. Floyd agreed, and Pillow, who put up a feeble argument for the retreat, agreed to the surrender. 39

In the early morning hours of February 16, the Cumberland defenses fell and the way was open for the Federals to move on Nashville. The surrender had more repercussions than merely the collapse of Johnston's center line. The manner in which the fort capitulated left a bitter memory among the troops that four years of valor would not erase. Although he was in command and he agreed to the surrender, Floyd did not remain with his troops. He feared that he would be tried for treason because of the alleged removal of Federal arms to Southern arsenals while he was Buchanan's Secretary of War. Instead, he commanded the only available steamboat, and ordered one of his Mississippi regiments to guard it while two Virginia regiments boarded. Dutifully, the Mississippians obeyed, expecting then to be put on board themselves. To their chagrin, the Mississippi troops found themselves standing on the dock while the steamboat left the dock and puffed upriver. Pillow's conduct was no better. Although second in command, he refused to surrender on the dubious grounds
that there was no general in the Confederacy other than Floyd whom the Federals would rather have as a prisoner than himself. Actually, Pillow was worth more to the Federals when he was commanding Confederate troops than he would be as a prisoner of war. The bluster that he had demonstrated in the council of war by calling for the troops to cut their way out, soon disappeared. Pillow handed the command of the fort to Buckner and, together with Jeremy Gilmer, unceremoniously escaped in a rowboat. Buckner sent a note to U. S. Grant, and the fall of Donelson was complete. The only consolation was the conduct of the gaunt, bearded Forrest, who stormed out of Floyd's headquarters, and refused to surrender. Forrest gathered his troopers and with many infantry riding double, led them through the freezing backwaters to safety in Nashville. 40

The forts were lost because of a command failure at several levels. The forts had been neglected by district commander Polk, by engineer Gilmer, and by Johnston himself. Into this area weakened by command neglect, Johnston sent equally weak officers with wide powers of defensive discretion. At Clarksville and at Donelson, these officers also failed their responsibilities. The result was that when the testing period for the strength of the forts came, the metal broke.
Notes


2. Pillow to Johnston, Nov. 6, 11, 1861, in NA, West. Dept., T.R., 1861; Mackall to Pillow, Nov. 11, 1861, in ibid., Polk Papers; F. A. Polk to Leonidas Polk, Nov. 16, 1861; Leonidas Polk to Sallie Polk, in Polk Papers, UNC; OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 532; S. R. Latta to wife, Dec. 25, 1861, Latta Papers, Tulane.


8. This expedition, led by C. F. Smith, convinced U. S. Grant of the weakness of Fort Henry. See Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston, 1960), 122-4; Powhattan Ellis Jr.,

9. On January 29, Halleck ordered Grant to take Fort Henry. Due to command conflicts and jealousy, Buell and Halleck did not cooperate in the venture and Halleck gave Grant no orders to take Fort Donelson. Grant made his move on Donelson independently and Halleck eventually saw he must go along. Grant moved on Henry with about 15,000 troops. When he moved overland to Fort Donelson, Grant delayed for several days and did not leave Henry until February 12. Meanwhile, Halleck ordered Andrew Foote's fleet of gunboats to steam up the Cumberland and attack Donelson. Foote brought with him transports containing six regiments to reinforce Grant. Grant's total force at the surrender of Donelson numbered about 27,000. See Lew Wallace, "The Capture of Fort Donelson," Battles and Leaders, I, 401-29; Ambrose, Halleck, 23-40; Grant, Memoirs, I, 298; Tilghman to Polk, Feb. 4, 10:30 A.M., Feb. 4, 1:30 P.M., Feb. 4, 4:30 P.M., Feb. 4, 5:30 P.M., Feb. 5, 1862, in NA, Polk Papers.


12. On January 19, Gilmer wrote his wife that "Our latest information is that Gen. Buell will probably abandon the direct line of attack and attempt to turn us & march to Nashville by way of Clarksville & the Cumberland river." Gilmer Papers, UNC; on Jan. 23, Gilmer wrote to his wife,


17. Hardee to Floyd, Feb. 5, 12, 1862, Johnston to Floyd, Feb. 12, 1862, in Floyd Papers, Duke.

18. Johnston to Floyd, Feb. 11, 14, 1862; Mackall to Floyd, Feb. 8, 1862, Mackall to Gilmer, Feb. 8, 1862, in


22. J. W. Head to Pillow, Feb. 7, 1862; Pillow to Mackall, Feb. 7, 1862, Pillow to Hardee, Feb. 6, 1862, Pillow to Johnston, Feb. 8, 1862, in NA, West. Dept., T.R., 1862; Mackall to Floyd, Jan. 27, 1862, in Headquarters Book, Tulane; Pillow's only engineer at Donelson, Joseph Dixon, was killed before the main naval battle began. The artillerymen who served the rifled and Columbiad guns had no experience with heavy guns. See H. L. Bedford, "Fight Between the Batteries and Gunboats at Fort Donelson," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1895), 165-173.


26. Pillow to Floyd, Feb. 8, 1862, Floyd Papers, Duke;
Pillow to Harris, Feb. 11, 1862, I. G. Harris, Tenn.;
Vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 268; one participant observed "It was
raining, snowing, and freezing, accompanied by a sharp
wind. With considerable difficulty we succeeded in pro-
curing some fuel to make fires to keep from freezing.
We had no tents....I understood that a number of soldiers
froze to death in the breastworks." John Guy, "Movements
of the Goochland Light Artillery," in Army Service Schools,
Donelson Campaign Sources (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1912),
142.

27. Powhatan Ellis, Jr., to Mother, Feb. 11, 1862,
Munford-Ellis Papers, Duke University Library; Head to
Pillow, Feb. 7, 1862, Pillow to Mackall, Feb. 7, 1862, in

28. Peter F. Walker, "Command Failure: The Fall of Forts
Henry and Donelson," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVI
(December 1957), 347-5; Pillow to Harris, Feb. 12, 1862, in
I. G. Harris, Tenn.

29. The Carondelet, a wooden gunboat manned by veteran
artillerists, was badly beaten by Floyd's gunners. Two
shots entered her bow, three struck the starboard case-
mating, four struck the port casemating, one struck the
starboard near the water line, and six hit the pilot house.
The smokestacks were also riddled. See Henry Walke, "The
Western Flotilla at Fort Donelson, Island Number Ten, Fort
Pillow and Memphis," Battles and Leaders, I, 434; Floyd
to Johnston, Feb. 13, 9 A.M., Feb. 13, Feb. 13, 1862, in
NA, Floyd Papers; Pillow to Johnston, Feb. 13, Feb. 13,
Feb. 13, 2:45 P.M., 1862; Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 13,
1862; Pillow to Harris, Feb. 13, 11:30 A.M., Feb. 13, 2:45
P.M., Feb. 13, in I. G. Harris, Tenn.; Grant's army formed
in battle line on February 13. C. F. Smith's division
held the left, or north flank, Lew Wallace's division was
in the center, and John McClernand's division was on the
right. Grant did not attack on the 13th or 14th for he planned
to use the same strategy with which he took Henry. Foote
would batter the fort into submission while Grant blocked
the escape routes on the land. Grant ordered his division
commanders not to initiate action that would bring on a
general engagement. Grant, Memoirs, I, 300-304.

30. Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 13, "Night," Feb. 14, 1862,
in NA, Floyd Papers.


33. Bushrod Johnson's attack mauled McClernand's division on Grant's right. Early that morning, Grant had gone to visit Captain Foote on his flagship, leaving specific instructions to each division commander not to move from his position without Grant's explicit consent. Lew Wallace sent to Grant's headquarters for permission to send help to McClernand but there was no one to give it. Only after Johnston had driven McClernand back two miles onto Wallace's division could the Federals send reinforcements. Wallace later said that Floyd could have "put his men fairly en route for Charlotte before the Federal commander could have interposed an obstruction to the movement." Wallace, "Capture of Fort Donelson," 419; see also Harris to Polk, Feb. 15, 1862, in NA, Polk Papers.

34. Stickles, Buckner, 143-4; Henry, Forrest, 55-6; despite the failure of the plan, encouraging news, which was misleading, was sent to Johnston of the day's action. Floyd telegraphed "we maintained a successful struggle which continued for nine hours and resulted in driving him from the field...." Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 15, "Midnight" 1862, in NA, Floyd Papers; Pillow boasted that they "Carried the whole field inch by inch and driving the enemy from every position." Pillow to Johnston, Feb. 15, 1862, ibid., West. Dept., T.R., 1862; the Donelson telegrapher reported to Johnston at 12:50 A.M. that "I think from reports I can safely say the day is hours." ibid.

36. OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 338-9, 347, 352, 302, 266; Pillow maintained later that "Genl Buckner is in error in stating that any purpose was ever determined upon in council, or indeed elsewhere previously to the battle, to retreat from the battlefield...." Pillow to Randolph, Nov. 8, 1862, NA, Pillow Papers.

37. The rumor at Donelson on the 15th was that Grant had 50,000 troops. W. H. Allen to Harris, Feb. 15, 1862, NA, West. Dept., T.R., 1862; Floyd had received information as early as the night of the 13th that 50,000 troops were concentrating. Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 13 "Night" 1862, in ibid., Floyd Papers; Wyeth, Forrest, 49-50; Stickles, Buckner, 155-7.

38. Major Nat Cheairs of the 3rd Tennessee wrote bitterly from Fort Warren prison in Boston Harbor that the surrender was ordered "to the utter astonishment of many of the soldiers and officers." Statement of Major Nat Cheair in John C. Brown Autograph Book, Confederate Collection, Tennessee Archives; "I was astonished" wrote a soldier in the 30th Tennessee, upon hearing of the surrender. H. C. Lockhart to wife, Lockhart Papers, UNC; a member of the 50th Tenn. infantry reported of the news that "Curse both loud and deep followed this intelligence." C. W. Tyler, "Fiftieth Tennessee Infantry," in Lindsley, Military Annals, 560; A soldier in the 42nd Tennessee wrote of the way the news was received in his regiment that "there was never greater surprise in any camp...." ibid., 516-7; Henry, Forrest, 557-B; Wyeth, Forrest, 49-50; Forrest later reported that two thirds of the army could have marched out without loss, OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 386; Forrest also stated that the road was open as late as 8 A.M. the morning of the 16th. ibid.; Gilmer wrote his wife that it was possible to save a remnant of the army. Feb. 22, 1862, Gilmer Papers, UNC.


40. Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 16, 1862, 3:45 A.M., Buckner to Johnston, Feb. 16, 1862, 4:10 A.M., in NA, West. Dept., T.R., 1862; Floyd to Johnston, Feb. 16, 1862, 11 A.M., in ibid., Floyd Papers; Buckner to Major Cosby, Buckner to Grant, Grant to Buckner, Buckner to Grant, Feb. 16, 1862, in Simon B. Buckner Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society. The background of Floyd's fear of Federal reprisal is found in Floyd to James Buchanan, July 31, Oct. 25, 1857, Floyd to S. A. Peugh, June 15, 1858, Floyd to Buchanan, Aug. 5, 1858, in John B. Floyd Papers, Pennsylvania
Historical Society. See also James Chalmer, "Forrest and His Campaigns," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, VII (1879), 457; General Bushrod Johnson, as late as February 18, escaped through the Federal lines by merely strolling out. See *OR*, I, Vol. 7, pp. 364-5.
THE HANDS ARE THE HANDS OF ESAU BUT THE VOICE
IS THE VOICE OF JACOB

When the Army Corps of Central Kentucky trudged
south from Bowling Green with snow swirling around the
Nashville pike, the move indicated more than just a retreat
across the Cumberland River. Three months before his
death in the Shiloh grove, Johnston was beginning to lose
control of the Army of Tennessee. The beginnings of the
process by which he lost that control could be seen in
the two factors which motivated the retreat to Nashville:
a mental fog which blinded him to the real situation at
Fort Donelson, and the rising influence of P. G. T.
Beauregard in the Army of Tennessee.

Johnston's mental attitude concerning Donelson opera-
tions ran from complete despair to dangerous optimism.
When he ordered the retreat from Bowling Green, he did so
because he did not think the fort could hold out against
the Lincoln gunboats. In fact, prior to the early morning
hours of February 16, he ignored the Federal infantry force
there, and did not comprehend that Floyd's men might be
trapped at Donelson by the land column. On February 7,
in a joint statement with Hardee and Beauregard, Johnston
described Donelson as not being tenable for long. That he
was referring only to gunboats was evident when on the
next day he informed Judah Benjamin that he thought only
the gunboats, and not the Federal infantry, would be engaged
at Donelson. All of Johnston's dispatches to Floyd before the battle at Donelson were concerned with the gunboat danger—not with the hazards Grant's land force might create. He asked Floyd if he could repulse a naval assault, but never asked if he could repel a land attack. Floyd, until after the gunboats were repulsed, could give no assurances of the fort's security, and so a disheartened Johnston ordered the retreat before the battle had started.¹

En route to Nashville, his despair turned to jubilation. Numerous telegrams sent by Floyd and Pillow to Johnston on the night of February 13 and on February 14 changed his mind about Donelson's fate. Not only had the fort held out against the dreaded gunboats, but had smashed the Yankee fleet and sent it limping back to Paducah. An unhealthy optimism replaced Johnston's defeatist attitude.

When the infantry clashed on February 15, Johnston was so confident of Floyd's success that he did not send Floyd a single reserve nor did he offer to go to Donelson. Part of this lack of concern was his belief in his gunboat theory. Part of the apathy was caused by misleading information which Floyd and Pillow telegraphed on the fifteenth. That evening, both generals sent Johnston glowing accounts of a brilliant victory over the Federals.
Of the half dozen telegrams sent to Johnston, not a single one reported that the fight had occurred while the garrison was attempting to cut their way out of the fort—and that the evacuation attempt had failed. In fact, Johnston did not know until after the fort had surrendered on the sixteenth, that any attempt was being made to leave Donelson.

Indeed, late on the night of the fifteenth, while the Donelson commanders huddled in conference at Dover Inn, Johnston telegraphed Benjamin of the "brilliant victory" won that day, and Isham Harris telegraphed Polk of the victory of "our glorious little army." Before he received the surrender news at three forty-five on the morning of the sixteenth, Johnston was completely deluded as to what was happening on the Donelson line. His ideas on the naval threat, his shock at the move by Grant which he still did not want to believe, and a lack of communication with Floyd had created a dangerous situation. Johnston was setting himself up for the same type of shock which Grant's move from Henry to Donelson had produced. In the shock of Donelson's surrender, Johnston began to abandon control of his army.

There was a man at Bowling Green who wanted the control of that army. P. G. T. Beauregard's most powerful influence on Johnston would not come until later, when Johnston decided
to abandon Middle Tennessee. At that time, Beauregard wrested from Johnston's hands the leadership of the Army of Tennessee. The seeds of this power shift, however, were sown at Bowling Green. Beauregard had come to Kentucky with visions of taking command. After his quarrel with Jefferson Davis concerning operations at First Manassas, Beauregard was approached by Roger Pryor, a supporter of his in the Congress. Apparently, Pryor functioned as a liaison between Beauregard and the President, and persuaded the General to accept a position in Johnston's army as commander of the left wing, replacing Polk at Columbus. Evidently, Beauregard was assured that Johnston had 70,000 troops, of whom 30,000 were in Polk's district. After much persuasion and a tacit promise that the Army of Tennessee would be strengthened so as to permit an offensive to be made, Beauregard accepted Davis' offer and went to Kentucky. ³

At Bowling Green, Beauregard paused to confer with Johnston, and began the process by which he would eventually control the Army. If Johnston was easily influenced by subordinates, Beauregard was capable of wielding such influence. Beauregard came West with the apparent idea that the Second Department was a place of exile for him, a field in which he would prove to Davis that he had misjudged Beauregard's abilities. Only a brilliant offensive could
win the plaudits of the Government, and when he came West, Beauregard had private plans for such an offensive. He hoped to persuade Earl Van Dorn to join the 30,000 men Beauregard thought were at Columbus, and move on Cairo. With his usual modesty, Beauregard described his scheme as a "brilliant programme." \(^4\)

Yet, Beauregard wanted more than just the command of the left wing. He envisioned himself as the savior of the entire Second Department, as the real leader behind the scenes. In a confidential note to a friend, written after his conference with Johnston, Beauregard described himself as "taking the helm when the ship is already on the breakers...." He did not specify which helm, but treatment of Johnston showed his underlying desire to take over the Army of Tennessee. Indeed, he had good motivation for taking over the helm. Even before Donelson fell, the people of the Second Department had begun to lose faith in Johnston. Beauregard received a hero's reception in the West. On the route from Manassas to Nashville, people gathered at railroad stations to cheer his arrival. In Nashville, he was presented to the State Legislature, and was asked to speak in a public meeting in that city. Leroy Walker wrote Beauregard that "The whole country looks up to you as a forlorn hope." \(^5\)

When Beauregard met with Johnston at Bowling Green,
he saw he must revise his original plans for an offensive. He learned that the left wing contained only 15,000 men instead of the expected 30,000, and that the entire Army of Tennessee numbered only 45,000 instead of the expected 70,000. Moreover, Fort Henry had been captured, and Beauregard realized that Yankee gunboats could now penetrate the Heartland to Florence, Alabama.

Armed with this new information and having seen the need for some revisions in his plans, Beauregard began to advise Johnston. Some of his advice was very sound. He made Johnston aware for the first time of the danger of the left and center corps being separated by a Federal move up the Tennessee River. He also made Johnston realize that Hardee's corps was in danger of being isolated on the north bank of the Cumberland if the Federal fleet broke through at Fort Donelson. Other suggestions which Beauregard made showed that his views of the Tennessee situation were colored by his dream of an offensive move. He first conveniently secured approval to act independently of Johnston. Beauregard gave as his reason that Fort Henry's surrender had for all purposes severed communications between forces in Middle and West Tennessee.

Johnston complied with this request, and thereby initiated the process by which the Army's control would pass from his hands. The next step in Beauregard's
maneuvers was to evacuate Columbus and pull the troops back deep into West Tennessee or North Mississippi. Beauregard explained to Johnston that the Columbus garrison was in danger of being outflanked by any move up the Tennessee River. Though his observation was true, he had at least two less unselfish reasons for wanting to draw the left wing south. Beauregard was not thinking of the defensive aspect, for immediately after he left Johnston, he issued urgent calls to the governors in the Second Department for troops, and sent a letter to Van Dorn. In both communications, he spoke of moving north on an offensive against Cairo and St. Louis. Thus, his primary concern was not the danger of being outflanked at Columbus, because his proposed offensive, if undertaken while the Federals held the Tennessee River, would only increase that danger. The truth was that he wanted to draw back the left flank so that he could build it up for his offensive.

His other reason for making the move was seen dimly while Beauregard was at Bowling Green, only to take effect when Johnston abandoned Nashville. Beauregard wanted to move south so that he could eventually join forces with Johnston—and possibly take control of the Army's operations. He hinted at this motive in his joint statement with Johnston and Hardee on February 7, which said that if
Johnston had to abandon Middle Tennessee, he should retreat to Stevenson, Alabama. On February 12, Beauregard suggested that the two wings must work independently until the Tennessee River was recaptured or until the Confederates "combined the movements of the two armies in rear of it." This statement was as far as Beauregard committed himself at that time. However, his pleas for Johnston to join him, which came immediately after Johnston announced he was retreating to Alabama, seem to indicate that Beauregard never wanted Johnston to move to Stevenson. On the contrary, he hoped to draw his commander-in-chief further west. 7

Armed with his independent command status and filled with prospects for greater things in the future, Beauregard left Bowling Green for Columbus. He found that his chance for greater things came even sooner than he had probably thought. Shortly after three o'clock on the morning of February 16, a messenger awakened Johnston at his Edgefield headquarters. A candle was lighted, the dispatch was read, and the Nashville-Bowling Green line began crumbling around Johnston. Only three hours after he had telegraphed Johnston additional news of the great victory over Grant on the fifteenth, Floyd now reported that his officers had agreed to surrender the fort and the garrison. Stunned, Johnston ordered Hardee to fall back immediately to Murfreesboro, thirty miles south of Nashville, where a decision would be made as to what to do. 8
There was no chance of making a stand at Nashville. When he left Bowling Green, Johnston had intended to fall back to his second line of defenses at Nashville, and make a stand there if Donelson fell. Johnston had absolute faith in the Nashville line. On Christmas Day, 1861, he had assured Isham Harris that the Nashville defenses guaranteed the city's safety. Yet, when Johnston arrived at Nashville, he learned for the first time that the city's line of defense had never been built. The knowledge of this, coupled with the supply tangle at Nashville, the threats to Hardee's corps on both flanks, and the loss of prestige by Johnston, drew the Army further under Beauregard's influence. 9

Gilmer had failed to build the Nashville-Clarksville defenses, just as he had failed to bolster the defenses at Fort Donelson. Nashvillians still had not responded to the requests for slave laborers to build the fortifications north of the Cumberland River. Now that the river was open to Nashville, such fortifications were no longer of any benefit. Gilmer never seemed to have anticipated this problem, and thus had not planned a defensive line on the south bank of the river. This oversight was a great error, and to compensate for it, independent, pitiable efforts were made during late January and early February to build some fortifications on the south bank. These
projects, like the earlier ones, did not receive public support, were uncoordinated in effort, and remained only a dream when Donelson fell. A twenty-gun battery was placed on the bluff below the city, and a submarine battery was planned for the river. Some advisors suggested stretching a large chain across the river. A local inventor came forward with a quack invention that supposedly fired submarine batteries located more than a mile away. Isham Harris began organizing independent companies to be put into line below the city. There was just not enough time to build the line that Johnston had assumed was already there. ¹⁰

Gilmer had also failed at Clarksville. As late as February 6, Pillow reported to Johnston that none of the Clarksville fortifications, supposedly begun in November, were complete. Only four guns were even available, and not one was mounted. The only battery site which effectively commanded the river was placed below the high water level, and the river was already rising. Desperate last minute efforts were made to build defenses. Plans for blocking the river channel were discussed. The soldiers at the Clarksville post were set to digging fortifications, but the tools they needed were not available. Negroes could not be obtained during December and January to work on the fortifications, and when Donelson fell, there was
absolutely nothing at Clarksville that would even slow the progress of the gunboats, much less prevent their passage upriver. Yet Johnston had definitely relied on fortifications at Clarksville to provide delaying tactics for gaining time needed at Nashville in the event of any emergency. Such time was not to be had. On February 19, the telegraph operator at Clarksville reported that from his key he could see the Lincoln gunboats steaming up the river.¹¹

At Nashville, Johnston also first realized the truth of Beauregard's warnings about being outflanked in Middle Tennessee. As early as February 7, the telegrapher at Florence, Alabama, excitedly reported that a steamboat had been chased there from Fort Henry by gunboats. The next day, five gunboats were in the Tennessee River at Florence, and reports began coming from points all along the river. The Memphis and Ohio railroad bridge at Danville was burned. Gunboats were reported at Clifton, Tennessee. A rumor sprang up that troops had disembarked from the gunboats at Florence and were marching on Tuscumbia to sever the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Although this rumor proved false, the threat was true. The Memphis and Charleston line ran west from Tuscumbia near the river for a distance of about thirty miles, and the Federals could easily land and cut the railroad line.¹²
Other intelligence indicated that Buell was preparing to move, and that another force was moving to outflank Johnston on the east. Johnston believed that Buell had 80,000 men on the Green River line, and scouts reported the Henry-Donelson activity was only a diversion to hold Johnston's attention while Buell moved south on Nashville. Meanwhile, another column was to move into East Tennessee. At Lexington, Kentucky, 900 wagons were reportedly being loaded for this flank move. Johnston's 14,000 men at Nashville, even when supplemented by the estimated 4,000 men that escaped Donelson, were no match for the army Buell allegedly had. Intelligence further reported that the Federal army at Donelson alone was between 60,000 and 75,000 strong. When Johnston evacuated Nashville, Captain John Hunt Morgan's troops penetrated the Yankee lines there and reported that 65,000 Federals were in the city. Johnston concluded that he was being encircled by two pincers while Buell moved against him with the main force. Already, pickets on the rear guard south of Bowling Green reported that they were being driven in by Buell's troopers.\[^{13}\]

Johnston also found at Nashville that his logistical support was swept away. Since the city's fall was not expected, no measures had been taken either to collect the valuable stores scattered at numerous depots between
Bowling Green and Nashville, or to evacuate the enormous amounts of supplies amassed at Nashville. Some advisors had warned that the supplies should be moved. On February 8, Isham Harris suggested moving the Nashville meat stores further south, and two days later, Moses Wright suggested the same for munitions stores. Their advice was not heeded by Johnston, and thus when Donelson fell, the logistical situation became hopelessly entangled. The few railroad cars available were being used to evacuate sick troops still in Kentucky. The winter rains had washed away many bridges and miles of track. The Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad alone had at least 1,200 broken rails. The railroad's president, V. K. Stevenson, also in charge of the Nashville supplies, abandoned his post and took a fast train for Chattanooga. During the week after Donelson fell, a washout on the line between Nashville and Chattanooga blocked all traffic over the road south of Nashville.¹⁴

As a result of these conditions, Johnston's supplies were lost in a debacle of confusion, inadequate preparation, and a lack of patriotism. At Clarksville, the commandant abandoned his post and order broke down. A wagon train of between seventy-five and one hundred wagons was stranded, as were several boatloads of pork. No boats or railroad cars were available to move the supplies. Eight days' provisions were stranded at Bowling Green.
At Franklin, Kentucky, 10,000 bushels of wheat were abandoned. Stores in large quantities remained at Bell's Station, Kentucky, and at Mitchellville, Tennessee. Twenty carloads of government stores were isolated at Columbia, Tennessee.

At Nashville, the supply service totally collapsed. About 70,000 pounds of bacon were piled on the Cumberland River wharf, and vast quantities of this supply floated off on the rising waters. John B. Floyd had been appointed post commandant at Nashville, but was as incapable of handling a post as he was commanding a fort. On February 18, Bedford Forrest was called in to restore order. Looting of government stores was widespread, as depots and warehouses were sacked and wagons laden with supplies were spirited away into the countryside. Unable to move the stores, the Quartermaster Department began to distribute them to the public.15

Forrest exerted superhuman efforts to remove all valuable supplies before the Federals arrived. He hauled to the depot 250,000 pounds of bacon, 600 boxes of army clothing, and thousands of pounds of flour. Valuable rifling machinery was dismantled and taken to Atlanta. Forty wagons loaded with ammunition were taken to a secure place south of Nashville. Despite his superb efforts, Forrest could not save a fraction of the supplies at
Nashville. The pork on the wharves was turned over to local citizens because it could not be moved. The railroad depot was filled with pork and other stores which could not be sent south for lack of transportation. These tremendous losses were never estimated officially, but St. John Liddell speculated that because of negligence, poor transportation and weather, and panic, half of the supplies of the Army of Tennessee were lost when Johnston abandoned Nashville. Whatever the figure, it was certain that when Hardee’s corps left Nashville, the Army’s logistical strength was completely devastated. 16

It had been panic that had hampered Forrest’s efforts most severely. The effects of the collapse of the Nashville myth of invincibility, of the first battle lost in Tennessee, and of the first surrender by a Confederate army, all combined to produce two attitudes in the people of the Heartland: panic and a loss of confidence in Johnston. The panic was felt chiefly by the Nashvillians and by the delta country on the Mississippi. In the Nashville area, morale broke down completely. At Clarksville, Confederates attempted to burn the railroad bridge to prevent the Federals from having a clear line from Bowling Green to the Tennessee River. A local citizens’ group headed by the mayor overpowered the hapless six Confederates who remained at their post at Clarksville and would not allow
them to burn the bridge. One bold lieutenant wriggled free and managed to set the bridge afire.

Panic erupted at Nashville when it was learned that the Confederates planned to abandon the town. A mob stormed Johnston's headquarters. Fighting, looting, and drunkenness were universal. When Forrest arrived, a lawless element had taken control of the town, and his efforts to remove supplies were impeded by the need to first restore order. He felled the ringleader of one mob with his pistol butt, and turned firehoses on another mob. When these more gentle resources had been exhausted and the mobs continued to surge through the streets, Forrest's troopers charged into their midst, and the Colonel himself used the flat side of his saber to discourage further pillaging. Self-interest was evident everywhere in Nashville. Citizens who had earlier been loud in their support of Johnston's army, now vigorously protested the destruction of the suspension bridge over the Cumberland, despite the fact that such a move helped delay Buell's occupation of Nashville and bought Johnston a little extra time in his retreat. When the Federals did appear on the north bank of the Cumberland, the mayor and his "committee" broke all records in rowing across the Cumberland to officially receive Buell's army.¹⁷

The panic eventually subsided, but the bitterness
toward Johnston remained. Hailed as the man who could save Tennessee, Johnston had been expected to accomplish too much. Now those people who had placed too much confidence in what one man could do on the Tennessee line were ready to look elsewhere for a savior. On February 28, while at Murfreesboro, St. John Liddell observed that:

Here the conclusion is almost universal that he is totally unfit for the position he holds in the Confederate army, and if he does nothing to retrieve his character very soon, he will be regarded as hopelessly embicile.18

In the Confederate Congress, the Tennessee delegation asked for Johnston's removal, and stated that "confidence is no longer felt in the military skill of General A. S. Johnston...." The delegation argued that the commanders had lost all confidence in him, and that the citizens "partake in the same feeling." The influential Charles Ready at Murfreesboro complained to Jefferson Davis that only his presence could save the Army from its demoralization. Other citizens wired the President that Johnston and Hardee should be removed. By March, both the public and Johnston himself had found their new salvation in the leadership of P. G. T. Beauregard. When he reported Donelson's fall to Richmond, Johnston's adjutant had uttered almost prophetic words: "We lost all."19

When Johnston left Nashville, his loss of control of the Army was visibly slipping from his grasp. As previously
agreed, he planned to move to Stevenson, Alabama, while Beauregard acted independently. Johnston, however, never went to Stevenson. Instead, by three progressive steps, the Army came under Beauregard's control. The first step occurred when Beauregard drew Johnston out of the Tennessee Valley and into the Mississippi Valley. He first persuaded Johnston to change his destination from Stevenson to Decatur, Alabama, by warning him that the Federals were moving up the Tennessee River and that a great battle in West Tennessee was imminent. On February 24, Johnston informed Davis that he was moving for Decatur. This change was significant, for if Johnston had gone to Stevenson, he would have operated from the base at Chattanooga, only forty miles east. Decatur, however, was 110 miles west of Chattanooga and was just as close to Beauregard's position in West Tennessee. 20

Once Johnston had made this initial change in destination, he was steadily drawn into Beauregard's territory. On February 26, even before Johnston had left Murfreesboro, Beauregard sent two telegrams asking him to move to West Tennessee, where a Federal advance was expected. The pressure of the Louisiana general was too strong. The next day, Johnston informed Judah Benjamin that he was moving "to cooperate or unite with Genl. Beauregard for the defence of Memphis and the
Mississippi." Johnston had chosen to defend the Mississippi Valley instead of holding Tennessee. On February 28, Hardee's corps took up the march for Decatur.\textsuperscript{21}

If Johnston had any qualms about giving up Tennessee, Beauregard's pressure soon erased them. No sooner than Johnston had left Murfreesboro, than Beauregard exerted pressure for Johnston to bring Hardee's corps to Beauregard's desired rendezvous point at Corinth, Mississippi. While Beauregard drew back the troops from Columbus to Jackson, Tennessee, reinforcements commanded by Braxton Bragg and Daniel Ruggles began assembling at Corinth. Beauregard then urged Johnston to come there also, and Johnston complied with his request. Benjamin was informed that Hardee's troops would move for Corinth. Not only was Johnston allowing Beauregard both to draw him out of Tennessee and to select the rendezvous area, but also Johnston began to allow Beauregard to manage departmental affairs. On March 7, Johnston stated he was moving either to cooperate with or to unite with Beauregard. The language used indicated that he referred to Beauregard as a commander equal in rank, and not a district commander serving under Johnston.\textsuperscript{22}

This tendency became more pronounced in the following weeks, as Beauregard began to give his commander orders. On March 6, he told Johnston to spread rumors that Hardee's
men were going to Chattanooga instead of Corinth. Two days later, Beauregard told, rather than asked, Johnston to send him Bushrod Johnson "immediately," and Johnston complied. Johnston was then told he should not use any more cars and engines on the Memphis and Charleston line than were absolutely necessary to move his troops to Corinth. Johnston meekly replied that he would "endeavor to form a junction with you in accordance with the plan agreed upon." Beauregard replied by ordering Johnston to send to Corinth any available surplus ammunition. On March 15, he asked Johnston to send him a brigade and two additional regiments. Johnston immediately sent Hindman's brigade and two other regiments. Beauregard even asked for Johnston's own adjutant, W. W. Mackall, and for the chief engineer, Jeremy Gilmer.

On March 17, Beauregard even informed Johnston that he did not approve a plan Johnston had submitted which called for their uniting at Adamsville, Tennessee. Johnston was flatly told that he must have formed such an opinion before he had received Beauregard's advice on the subject. Even after the two generals met at Corinth, Beauregard continued to manage the Army's affairs. Although only in command of Polk's troops, Beauregard took it upon himself to telegraph the War Department to send a major general and four brigadiers to be used by Braxton Bragg's
troops, as well as by Polk's. Beauregard even told Johnston to telegraph "for the generals you may require."\(^{23}\)

The method by which Beauregard managed to obtain such wide control was also the method he used to complete the final stage of his assumption of leadership. Repeatedly, he bombarded Johnston with threats of a Federal invasion up the Tennessee River. He warned that such an invasion would either isolate Johnston in North Alabama or strike Beauregard in West Tennessee. Whether he intended to or not, Beauregard, by using this same method of sending alarming notes, gathered under his wing not only Johnston's immediate command but also almost all the reinforcements which were sent to Tennessee. In a series of dramatic statements, Beauregard excited the attention of the Mississippi Valley people as well as the authorities in Richmond. For the first time, Richmond hastened to answer pleas from the West. The reinforcements sent went to Beauregard's district, where they were assimilated into his command. The result was that Beauregard became the commander of an army instead of a corps.\(^{24}\)

Beauregard was simply more adept at stirring public opinion than Johnston had been. In his call to the governors of the Second Department for troops, Beauregard promised an invasion to the Ohio River. Shortly thereafter, he made his famous call for plantation bells to be gathered in
the Mississippi Valley to be melted down and cast into cannon. Such a project was not feasible, but was excellent propaganda. These messages, combined with his fiery telegrams to Richmond warning of a Federal sweep down the Mississippi Valley, stirred the Central Government which was already shocked by the Middle Tennessee disaster. Streams of reinforcements poured into West Tennessee, all of them to Beauregard. Four regiments commanded by Daniel Ruggles were sent from Mansfield Lovell at New Orleans. Recruits began to assemble in both Alabama and Mississippi. In early March, Braxton Bragg, with 10,000 fine troops from Mobile and Pensacola, moved north to Corinth. 25

Beauregard not only had the ability to obtain reinforcements, but also managed to take complete charge of them. Although it was not in his agreement with Johnston, he styled himself as the commander of the Army of the Mississippi Valley. He referred to the command to which he had originally been assigned, Polk's corps, as the First Grand Division, and to Bragg's and Ruggles' reinforcements as the Second Grand Division. Beauregard even created districts within the district to which he had been assigned, and appointed Polk and Bragg to command them. 26

Despite his penchant for the extravagant, exemplified in his invasion plan which was formulated at a time when the Army was already facing short rations, Beauregard pro-
vided a stabilizing influence which the Army badly needed. He brought to the Army ideas of departmental coordination. Under Johnston, the sub-commanders had operated loosely, with no combined effort. Beauregard established forage and ordnance depots, and made provisions for better distribution of supplies to the troops. His organization of Polk's troops into the Army of the Mississippi Valley, though it went further than Johnston had intended, did bring a tightly knit organization to the left wing. In the matter of regimental and division organization, both Polk and Johnston had been poor housekeepers. Beauregard provided for a complete revamping of Polk's command into an organized system of regiments, brigades, and divisions.

For the first time, the Army of Tennessee began to give evidence of cohesion. Johnston's organization had been determined according to geographical lines more than according to a system of army corps. The commands of Polk, Hardee, and Zollicoffer bore only the slightest resemblance to an army consisting of three corps. In every command, regiments were of minimum strength, and brigades contained no uniform number of regiments. Beauregard's "Confidential Notes of Reference," issued on March 5, were designed to cement the existing Army's organization, to rebuild its shattered logistical structure,
and to assimilate into the main command the reinforcements that he had garnered. A unity which Johnston had been unable to achieve began to form in the Army of Tennessee in early April, 1862.27

This unity was not all beneficial, for the control of the Army was passing into the hands of a "river general." The transfer of leadership had begun at Bowling Green, when Johnston, confused by the force which had smashed the inland river forts, became susceptible to Beauregard's influence. Beauregard's hold became so powerful that Johnston turned aside from the Heartland to defend the Mississippi Valley. In the opinion of many, this move was a mistake, for it lost the rich storehouses of Tennessee, practically conceded North Alabama and the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, and placed in jeopardy the bastion at Chattanooga and all of East Tennessee.28

This is not to say that Johnston's influence was entirely forgotten when Beauregard took control of the Army. Johnston's influence remained with the Army of Tennessee till the last days around Durham's Station in 1865. He was the first of a series of commanders who tempered the Army's strength during the War. Johnston's impact on the Army during his period of command left much to be desired. Weaknesses in his personality had failed to give strong temper to the new metal of the Army. His preoccupation
with Buell, his concentration upon the Bowling Green
district, his failure to insure that Polk met his
district responsibilities, and his failure to develop
cooperation between Hardee and Zollicoffer, all resulted
from weaknesses in his personality. His difficulty in
communicating with people, his absorption in one task at
a time, his lack of sternness in handling unruly sub-
ordinates, were all personality factors which combined
to weaken the Tennessee line.

The weakness of Johnston's influence not only failed
to temper the Army while he commanded it, but also produced
traits that would remain with the Army and the land in
which it fought. The Heartland began to assume the shape
of the Central Confederacy, which was to be plagued
throughout the War with a lack of strong command, high
command dispute and confusion, and neglect by Richmond.

Ironically, the most constructive influence Johnston
had on the Army was a result of his failure, and not of
any success he might have had. His failure to solidify
the high command helped to produce the individual elan
that welded the Army together for four dark years. The
debacles of Mill Springs and Donelson wounded the pride
of the individual soldiers of the Army, more so than
historians have recognized. Many of these soldiers were
embarrassed by the defeats, some thought their comrades
had been sold out too cheaply at Donelson, and others believed the Army had not been given a real chance to show its fighting qualities. Perhaps these attitudes help explain the exceptional valor and tenacity with which the private soldiers always fought.

Even Johnston's abandonment of Tennessee wrought a constructive influence. The Army had always been a Tennessee-oriented force. The Army's nucleus was the State army, and the first defensive line stretched the length of Tennessee. Throughout the War, Tennessee remained, at least in spirit, the Army's home. When Johnston left Middle Tennessee, many soldiers were bitterly disappointed and a new element was added to their spirit—a determination to retake Tennessee. From Shiloh to Franklin, Rebel commanders whipped their regiments into a fighting spirit by reminding them that the battle was to regain Tennessee. "Home to Tennessee" would be the Army's battle cry and morale booster throughout the War.

As strong as Johnston's influence had been, it faded, at least on the surface, as the Army marched toward Corinth and a junction with Beauregard. Back on the Arizona desert, Johnston had seen the rising star and the fast disappearing comet, and had pondered which was to be his fate. His services in Tennessee had shown that
the comet was his sign, for while he had come to
Tennessee with the acclaim of a hundred thousand lips,
he was now an object of scorn in the Army of Tennessee.
Weeks before the guns opened at Shiloh, a new rising
star and a new influence was being felt in the Army.
The command was still Johnston's--but the control of
the Army was Beauregard's.
Notes


5. Beauregard to R. A. Pryor, Feb. 14, 1862, Beauregard Papers, Duke; OR, I, Vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 275; Vol. 7, pp. 899-901; Williams, Beauregard, 115; Roman, Beauregard, I, 213; Beauregard was definitely a "river general," and considered the defense of the Mississippi subordinate to anything else; on Feb. 23 he wrote Samuel Cooper that "all operations in States bordering on the Mississippi River should be made subordinate to the secure possession of that river...." OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 899; he wrote Pryor that "We must give up some minor points & concentrate our forces to save the most important ones, or we will lose all of them in succession," Feb. 14, 1862, in Beauregard Papers, Duke; the grand invasion plan proposed to Van Dorn, calling for a concentration in West Tennessee and a thrust northward, was similar to the plan Beauregard later proposed to Bragg. See Beauregard to Braxton Bragg, Sept. 2, 1862, in Bragg Papers, Western Reserve.


16. Wyeth, *Forrest*, 58-9; Forrest reported that by the time he took command, large amounts of meat and other supplies on the wharf and in the commissary warehouse were being hauled away by citizens. He stated that "a very large amount was taken off before I was placed in command.... It was eight days from the time the quartermaster left the city, before the arrival of the enemy; commissaries and other parties connected with these departments, leaving at the same time. With proper diligence on their part, I have no doubt all the public stores might have been transported to places of safety." "Col. Nathan B. Forrest's Responses to Interrogatories of Committee of Confederate House of Representatives," in Ridley, *Battles and Sketches*, 72; Basil Duke said "I saw an old woman, whose appearance indicated the extremest decrepitude, staggering under a load of meat which I would have hardly thought a quartermaster's mule could carry."


18. Liddell to wife, Feb. 28, 1862, Liddell Papers, LSU.


22. Beauregard to Johnston, March 2, 1862, Beauregard to Mackall, March 4, 1862, in Johnston-Beauregard Correspondence, Tulane; Johnston to Benjamin, March 5, 1862, Johnston to Jeff. Davis, March 7, 1862, in Headquarters Book, Tulane.

23. Beauregard to Johnston, March 6, 8, 10, 12, 12, 15, 17, 24, April 2, 1862, Johnston to Beauregard, March 11, 1862, in Johnston-Beauregard Correspondence, Tulane; Johnston to Beauregard, March 11, 1862, Johnston to Bragg, March 19, 1862, Johnston to Jeff. Davis. March 15, 25, 1862, in Headquarters Book, Tulane; Special Orders No. 10, Western Dept., March 10, 1862, in Order Book, ibid.

24. Beauregard to Mackall, March 8, 1862, in Johnston-Beauregard Correspondence, Tulane; Beauregard to Johnston, March 16, 1862, in ibid.; Beauregard to Johnston, March 13, 1862, in Johnston, Barret, ibid.; Gilmer to wife, March 9, 15, 1862, in Gilmer Papers, UNC.


27. "Confidential Notes of Reference of P. G. T. Beauregard," March 4, 1862, Ms. in Johnston, Barret, Tulane; Williams, Beauregard, 120-3.

28. Gilmer to wife, March 3, 21, 1862, in Gilmer Papers, UNC.
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Van Dorn's papers include material on West Tennessee defenses.
Shorter's letters provide valuable information on the arms dilemma in the Second Department.
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Nathan Bedford Forrest Letters.
William Hardee Papers.
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The Beauregard, Floyd, Pillow and Polk papers all contain important information on this period. The Bragg, Harris and Kirby-Smith papers give valuable data on geography, logistics and Union sentiment in Tennessee and Kentucky. The remainder are chiefly soldiers' letters and post-war accounts but are important for biographical, geographical and weather information.

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